

· Ballads ·  
OF A CHEECHAKO

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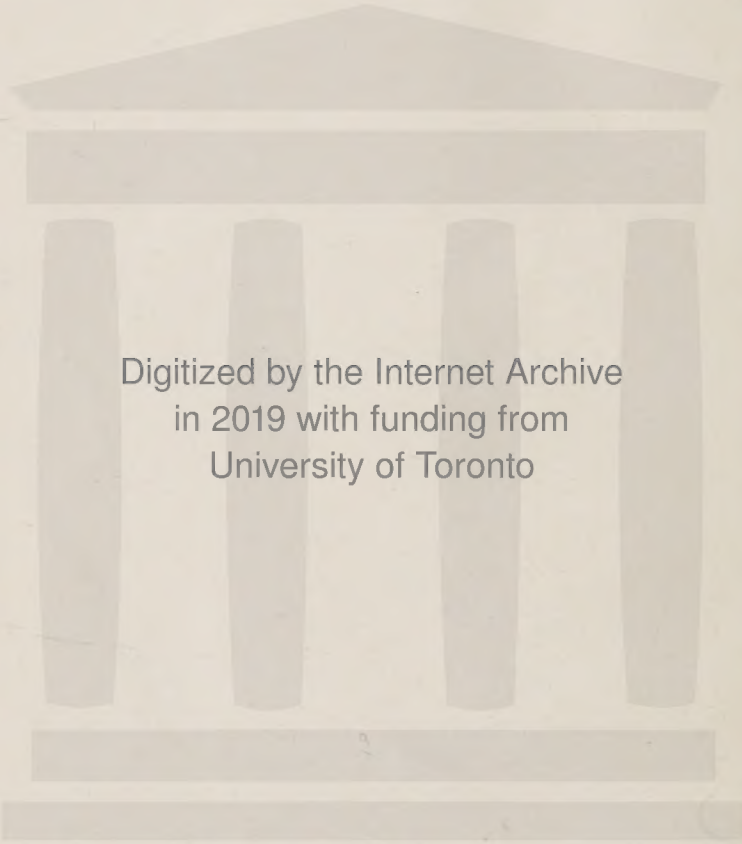




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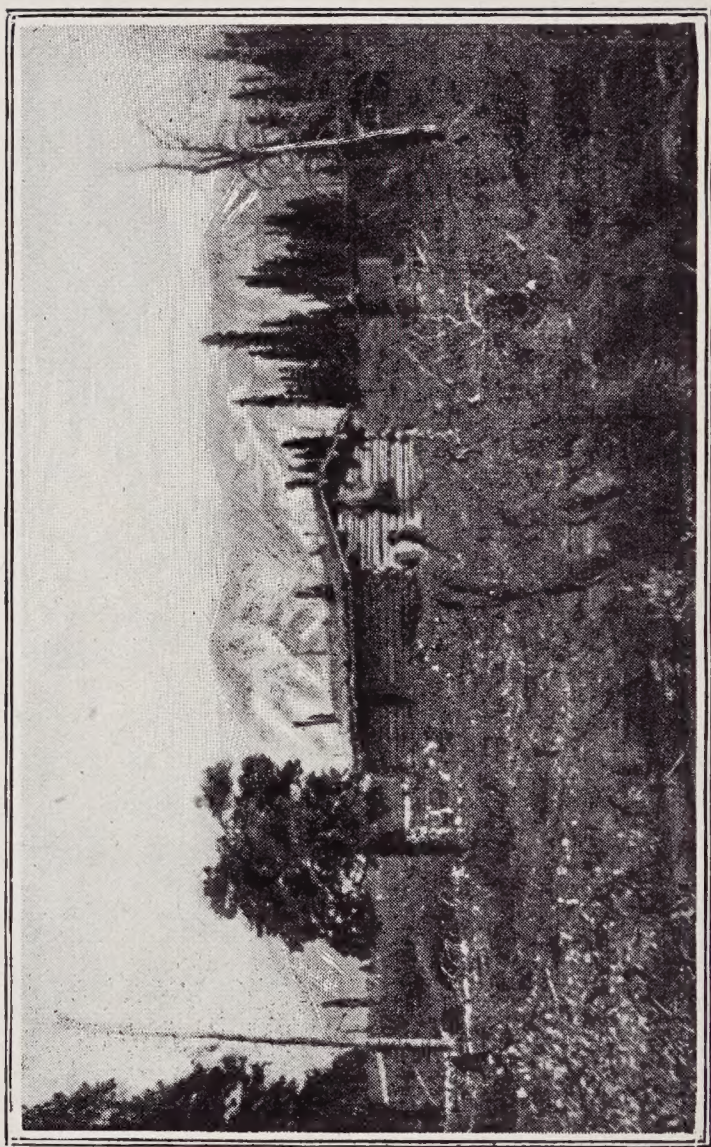
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BALLADS OF  
— A —  
CHEECHAKO





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THE LONELY WAIF OF THE WOOD-CAMP.

# **BALLADS OF A CHEECHAKO**

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BY  
**ROBERT W. SERVICE**

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**TORONTO  
WILLIAM BRIGGS  
1909**

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ROBERT W. SERVICE.

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BALLADS OF  
— A —  
CHEECHAKO





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## TO THE MAN OF THE HIGH NORTH

---

### TO THE MAN OF THE HIGH NORTH

*MY rhymes are rough, and often in my  
rhyming  
I've drifted, silver-sailed, on seas of  
dream,  
Hearing afar the bells of Elfland chiming,  
Seeing the groves of Arcadie agleam.*

*I was the thrall of Beauty that rejoices  
From peak snow-diademed to regal star;  
Yet to mine aerie ever pierced the voices,  
The pregnant voices of the Things That  
Are.*

*The Here, the Now, the vast Forlorn  
around us;  
The gold-delirium, the ferine strife;  
The lusts that lure us on, the hates that  
hound us;  
Our red rags in the patch-work quilt of  
Life.*

---

---

## TO THE MAN OF THE HIGH NORTH

---

*The nameless men who nameless rivers  
travel,  
And in strange valleys greet strange  
deaths alone;  
The grim, intrepid ones who would unravel  
The mysteries that shroud the Polar  
Zone.*

*These will I sing, and if one of you linger  
Over my pages in the Long, Long Night,  
And on some lone line lay a calloused  
finger,  
Saying: "It's human-true—it hits me  
right;"  
Then will I count this loving toil well  
spent;  
Then will I dream awhile—content, content.*

---

## MEN OF THE HIGH NORTH

---

### MEN OF THE HIGH NORTH

MEN of the High North, the wild sky is  
blazing;

Islands of opal float on silver seas;  
Swift splendors kindle, barbaric, amazing;  
Pale ports of amber, golden argosies.

Ringed all around us the proud peaks are  
glowing;

Fierce chiefs in council, their wigwam the  
sky;

Far, far below us the big Yukon flowing,  
Like threaded quicksilver, gleams to the  
eye.

Men of the High North, you who have  
known it;

You in whose hearts its splendors have  
abode;

Can you renounce it; can you disown it?

Can you forget it, its glory and its goad?  
Where is the hardship, where is the pain  
of it?

Lost in the limbo of things you've forgot;  
Only remain the guerdon and gain of it;

Zest of the foray, and God, how you  
fought!

---

## MEN OF THE HIGH NORTH

---

You who have made good, you foreign  
faring;  
You money magic to far lands has  
whirled;  
Can you forget those days of vast daring,  
There with your soul on the Top o' the  
World?  
Nights when no peril could keep you awake  
on  
Spruce boughs you spread for your couch  
in the snow;  
Taste all your feasts like the beans and the  
bacon  
Fried at the camp-fire at forty below?

Can you remember your huskies all going,  
Barking with joy and their brushes in  
air;  
You in your parka, glad-eyed and glowing,  
Monarch, your subjects the wolf and the  
bear?  
Monarch your kingdom unravisht and  
gleaming;  
Mountains your throne, and a river your  
car;  
Crash of a bull moose to rouse you from  
dreaming;  
Forest your couch, and your candle a  
star.

---

## MEN OF THE HIGH NORTH

---

You who this faint day the High North is  
luring

Unto her vastness, taintlessly sweet;  
You who are steel-braced, straight-lipped,  
enduring,

Dreadless in danger and dire in defeat:  
Honor the High North ever and ever,  
Whether she crown you, or whether she  
slay;

Suffer her fury, cherish and love her—  
He who would rule he must learn to  
obey.

Men of the High North, fierce mountains  
love you;

Proud rivers leap when you ride on their  
breast.

See, the austere sky, pensive above you,  
Dons all her jewels to smile on your rest.  
Children of Freedom, scornful of frontiers,  
We who are weaklings honor your  
worth.

Lords of the wilderness, Princes of  
Pioneers,

Let's have a rouse that will ring round  
the earth.



---

## THE BALLAD OF THE NORTHERN LIGHTS

---

### THE BALLAD OF THE NORTHERN LIGHTS

ONE of the Down and Out—that's me.  
    Stare at me well, ay, stare!  
Stare and shrink—say! you wouldn't think  
    that I was a millionaire.  
Look at my face, it's crimped and gouged—  
    one of them death-mask things;  
Don't seem the sort of man, do I, as might  
    be the pal of kings?  
Slouching along in smelly rags, a bleary-  
    eyed, no-good bum;  
A knight of the hollow needle, pard, spewed  
    from the sodden slum.  
Look me all over from head to foot; how  
    much would you think I was worth?  
A dollar? a dime? a nickel? Why, *I'm*  
    *the wealthiest man on earth.*

No, don't you think that I'm off my base.  
    You'll sing a different tune  
If only you'll let me spin my yarn. Come  
    over to this saloon;  
Wet my throat—it's as dry as chalk—and  
    seeing as how it's you,

---

## THE BALLAD OF THE NORTHERN LIGHTS

---

I'll tell the tale of a Northern trail, and so  
    help me God, it's true.  
I'll tell of the howling wilderness and the  
    haggard Arctic heights,  
Of a reckless vow that I made, and how I  
    *staked the Northern Lights.*

Remember the year of the Big Stampede  
    and the trail of Ninety-eight,  
When the eyes of the world were turned to  
    the North, and the hearts of men  
    elate;  
Hearts of the old dare-devil breed thrilled  
    at the wondrous strike,  
And to every man who could hold a pan  
    came the message, "Up and hike."  
Well, I was there with the best of them,  
    and I knew I would not fail.  
You wouldn't believe it to see me now; but  
    wait till you've heard my tale.

You've read of the trail of Ninety-eight,  
    but its woe no man may tell;  
It was all of a piece and a whole yard wide,  
    and the name of the brand was  
    "Hell."  
We heard the call and we staked our all;  
    we were plungers playing blind,  
And no man cared how his neighbor fared,  
    and no man looked behind;

---

---

## THE BALLAD OF THE NORTHERN LIGHTS

---

For a ruthless greed was born of need, and  
the weakling went to the wall,  
And a curse might avail where a prayer  
would fail, and the gold lust crazed  
us all.

Bold were we and they called us three the  
"Unholy Trinity";  
There was Ole Olson, the sailor Swede, and  
the Dago Kid and me.  
We were the discards of the pack, the fore-  
loopers of Unrest,  
Reckless spirits of fierce revolt in the fer-  
ment of the West.  
We were bound to win and we revelled in  
the hardships of the way.  
We staked our ground and our hopes were  
crowned, and we hoisted out the pay.  
We were rich in a day beyond our dreams,  
it was gold from the grass-roots  
down;  
But we weren't used to such sudden wealth,  
and there was the siren town.  
We were crude and careless frontiersmen,  
with much in us of the beast;  
We could bear the famine worthily, but  
we lost our heads at the feast.

---

## THE BALLAD OF THE NORTHERN LIGHTS

---

The town looked mighty bright to us, with  
a bunch of dust to spend,  
And nothing was half too good them days,  
and everyone was our friend.  
Wining meant more than mining then, and  
life was a dizzy whirl,  
Gambling and dropping chunks of gold  
down the neck of a dance-hall girl;  
Till we went clean mad, it seems to me, and  
we squandered our last poke,  
And we sold our claim, and we found our-  
selves one bitter morning—broke.

The Dago Kid he dreamed a dream of his  
mother's aunt who died—  
In the dawn-light dim she came to him,  
and she stood by his bedside,  
And she said: "Go forth to the highest  
North till a lonely trail ye find;  
Follow it far and trust your star, and For-  
tune will be kind."  
But I jeered at him, and then there came  
the Sailor Swede to me,  
And he said: "I dreamed of my sister's son,  
who croaked at the age of three.  
From the herded dead he sneaked and said:  
'Seek you an Arctic trail;  
'Tis pale and grim by the Polar rim, but  
seek and ye shall not fail.'"

---

## THE BALLAD OF THE NORTHERN LIGHTS

---

And lo! that night I too did dream of my  
    mother's sister's son,  
And he said to me: "By the Arctic Sea  
    there's a treasure to be won.  
Follow and follow a lone moose trail, till  
    you come to a valley grim,  
On the slope of the lonely watershed that  
    borders the Polar brim."  
Then I woke my pals, and soft we swore  
    by the mystic Silver Flail,  
'Twas the hand of Fate, and to-morrow  
    straight we would seek the lone  
    moose trail.

We watched the groaning ice wrench free,  
    crash on with a hollow din;  
Men of the wilderness were we, freed from  
    the taint of sin.  
The mighty river snatched us up and it  
    bore us swift along;  
The days were bright, and the morning  
    light was sweet with jewelled song.  
We poled and lined up nameless streams,  
    portaged o'er hill and plain;  
We burnt our boat to save the nails, and  
    built our boat again;



---

## THE BALLAD OF THE NORTHERN LIGHTS

---

We guessed and groped, north, ever north,  
    with many a twist and turn;  
We saw ablaze in the deathless days the  
    splendid sunsets burn.  
O'er soundless lakes where the grayling  
    makes a rush at the clumsy fly;  
By bluffs so steep that the hard-hit sheep  
    falls sheer from out the sky;  
By lilled pools where the bull moose cools  
    and wallows in huge content;  
By rocky lairs where the pig-eyed bears  
    peered at our tiny tent.  
Through the black canyon's angry foam  
    we hurled to dreamy bars,  
And round in a ring the dog-nosed peaks  
    bayed to the mocking stars.  
Spring and summer and autumn went; the  
    sky had a tallow gleam,  
Yet north and ever north we pressed to  
    the land of our Golden Dream.

So we came at last to a tundra vast and  
    dark and grim and lone;  
And there was the little lone moose trail,  
    and we knew it for our own.  
By muskeg hollow and nigger-head it  
    wandered endlessly;  
Sorry of heart and sore of foot, weary men  
    were we.

---

## THE BALLAD OF THE NORTHERN LIGHTS

---

The short-lived sun had a leaden glare and  
the darkness came too soon,  
And stationed there with a solemn stare  
was the pinched, anæmic moon.  
Silence and silvern solitude till it made you  
dumbly shrink,  
And you thought to hear with an outward  
ear the things you thought to think.

Oh, it was wild and weird and wan, and  
ever in camp o' nights  
We would watch and watch the silver dance  
of the mystic Northern Lights.  
And soft they danced from the Polar sky  
and swept in primrose haze;  
And swift they pranced with their silver  
feet, and pierced with a blinding  
blaze;  
They danced a cotillion in the sky; they  
were rose and silver shod;  
It was not good for the eyes of man—'twas  
a sight for the eyes of God.  
It made us mad and strange and sad, and  
the gold whereof we dreamed  
Was all forgot, and our only thought was  
of the lights that gleamed.

---

## THE BALLAD OF THE NORTHERN LIGHTS

---

Oh, the tundra sponge it was golden brown,  
    and some was a bright blood-red;  
And the reindeer moss gleamed here and  
    there like the tombstones of the dead.  
And in and out and around about the little  
    trail ran clear,  
And we hated it with a deadly hate and  
    we feared with a deadly fear.  
And the skies of night were alive with light,  
    with a throbbing, thrilling flame;  
Amber and rose and violet, opal and gold it  
    came.  
It swept the sky like a giant scythe, it quiv-  
    ered back to a wedge;  
Argently bright, it cleft the night with a  
    wavy golden edge.  
Pennants of silver waved and streamed, lazy  
    banners unfurled;  
Sudden splendors of sabres gleamed, light-  
    ning javelins were hurled.  
There in our awe we crouched and saw  
    with our wild, uplifted eyes  
Charge and retire the hosts of fire in the  
    battlefield of the skies.

But all things come to an end at last, and  
    the muskeg melted away,  
And frowning down to bar our path a  
    muddle of mountains lay.

---

## THE BALLAD OF THE NORTHERN LIGHTS

---

And a gorge sheered up in granite walls,  
and the moose trail crept betwixt:  
'Twas as if the earth had gaped too far and  
her stony jaws were fixt.  
Then the winter fell with a sudden swoop,  
and the heavy clouds sagged low,  
And earth and sky were blotted out in a  
whirl of driving snow.

We were climbing up a glacier in the neck  
of a mountain pass,  
When the Dago Kid slipped down and fell  
into a deep crevasse.  
When we got him out one leg hung limp,  
and his brow was wreathed with pain,  
And he says: "'Tis badly broken, boys, and  
I'll never walk again.  
It's death for all if we linger here, and  
that's no cursed lie;  
Go on, go on while the trail is good, and  
leave me down to die."  
He raved and swore, but we tended him  
with our uncouth, clumsy care.  
The camp-fire gleamed and he gazed and  
dreamed with a fixed and curious  
stare.  
Then all at once he grabbed my gun and  
he put it to his head,  
And he says: "I'll fix it for you, boys"—  
them are the words he said.

---

---

## THE BALLAD OF THE NORTHERN LIGHTS

---

So we sewed him up in a canvas sack and  
    we slung him to a tree;  
And the stars like needles stabbed our eyes,  
    and woeful men were we.  
And on we went on our woeful way, wrapped  
    in a daze of dream,  
And the Northern Lights in the crystal  
    nights came forth with a mystic  
    gleam.  
They danced and they danced the devil-  
    dance over the naked snow;  
And soft they rolled like a tide upshoaled  
    with a ceaseless ebb and flow.  
They rippled green with a wondrous sheen,  
    they fluttered out like a fan;  
They spread with a blaze of rose-pink rays  
    never yet seen of man.  
They writhed like a brood of angry snakes,  
    hissing and sulphur pale;  
Then swift they changed to a dragon vast,  
    lashing a cloven tail.  
It seemed to us, as we gazed aloft with an  
    everlasting stare,  
The sky was a pit of bale and dread, and a  
    monster revelled there.

We climbed the rise of a hog-back range  
    that was desolate and drear,  
When the Sailor Swede had a crazy fit, and  
    he got to talking queer.

---

## THE BALLAD OF THE NORTHERN LIGHTS

---

He talked of his home in Oregon and the  
    peach trees all in bloom,  
And the fern head-high, and the topaz sky,  
    and the forest's scented gloom.  
He talked of the sins of his misspent life,  
    and then he seemed to brood,  
And I watched him there like a fox a hare,  
    for I knew it was not good.  
And sure enough in the dim dawn-light I  
    missed him from the tent,  
And a fresh trail broke through the crusted  
    snow, and I knew not where it went.  
But I followed it o'er the seamless waste,  
    and I found him at shut of day,  
Naked there as a new-born babe—so I left  
    him where he lay.

Day after day was sinister, and I fought  
    fierce-eyed despair,  
And I clung to life, and I struggled on, I  
    knew not why nor where.  
I packed my grub in short relays, and I  
    cowered down in my tent,  
And the world around was purged of sound  
    like a frozen continent.  
Day after day was dark as death, but ever  
    and ever at nights,  
With a brilliancy that grew and grew,  
    blazed up the Northern Lights.



---

## THE BALLAD OF THE NORTHERN LIGHTS

---

They rolled around with a soundless sound  
like softly bruised silk;  
They poured into the bowl of the sky with  
the gentle flow of milk.  
In eager, pulsing violet their wheeling  
chariots came,  
Or they poised above the Polar rim like a  
coronal of flame.  
From depths of darkness fathomless their  
lancing rays were hurled,  
Like the all-combining search-lights of the  
navies of the world.  
There on the roof-pole of the world as one  
bewitched I gazed,  
And howled and grovelled like a beast as  
the awful splendors blazed.  
My eyes were seared, yet thrallèd I peered  
through th parka hood nigh blind;  
But I staggered on to the lights that shone,  
'and never I looked behind.

There is a mountain round and low that  
lies by the Polar rim,  
And I climbed its height in a whirl of light,  
and I peered o'er its jagged brim;  
And there in a crater deep and vast, un-  
gained, unguessed of men,



---

## THE BALLAD OF THE NORTHERN LIGHTS

---

The mystery of the Arctic world was  
    flashed into my ken.  
For there these poor dim eyes of mine  
    beheld the sight of sights—  
That hollow ring was the source and spring  
    of the mystic Northern Lights.

Then I staked that place from crown to  
    base, and I hit the homeward trail.  
Ah, God! it was good, though my eyes were  
    blurred, and I crawled like a sickly  
    snail.

In that vast white world where the silent  
    sky communes with the silent snow,  
In hunger and cold and misery I wandered  
    to and fro.

But the Lord took pity on my pain, and  
    He led me to the sea,

And some ice-bound whalers heard my  
    moan, and they fed and sheltered me.

They fed the feeble scarecrow thing that  
    stumbled out of the wild

With the ravaged face of a mask of death  
    and the wandering wits of a child—

A craven, cowering bag of bones that once  
    had been a man.

They tended me and they brought me back  
    to the world, and here I am.

---

## THE BALLAD OF THE NORTHERN LIGHTS

---

Some say that the Northern Lights are the  
glare of the Arctic ice and snow;  
And some that it's electricity, and nobody  
seems to know.  
But I'll tell you now—and if I lie, may my  
lips be stricken dumb—  
It's a *mine*, a mine of the precious stuff that  
men call radium.  
It's a million dollars a pound, they say, and  
there's tons and tons in sight.  
You can see it gleam in a golden stream in  
the solitudes of night.  
And it's mine, all mine—and say! if you  
have a hundred plunks to spare,  
I'll let you have the chance of your life, I'll  
sell you a quarter share.  
You turn it down? Well, I'll make it ten,  
seeing as you are my friend.  
Nothing doing? Say! don't be hard—have  
you got a dollar to lend?  
Just a dollar to help me out, I know you'll  
treat me white;  
I'll do as much for you some day . . .  
God bless you, sir; good-night.

---

## THE BALLAD OF THE BLACK FOX SKIN

---

### THE BALLAD OF THE BLACK FOX SKIN

#### I.

THERE was Claw-fingered Kitty and Windy  
Ike living the life of shame,  
When unto them in the Long, Long Night  
came the man-who-had-no-name;  
Bearing his prize of a black fox pelt, out  
of the Wild he came.

His cheeks were blanched as the flume-head  
foam when the brown spring freshets  
flow;  
Deep in their dark, sin-calcined pits were  
his sombre eyes aglow;  
They knew him far for the fitful man who  
spat forth blood on the snow.  
“Did ever you see such a skin?” quoth he;  
there’s nought in the world so fine—  
Such fullness of fur as black as the night,  
such lustre, such size, such shine;  
It’s life to a one-lunged man like me; it’s  
London, it’s women, it’s wine.

“The Moose-hides called it the devil-fox,  
and swore that no man could kill;  
That he who hunted it, soon or late, must  
surely suffer some ill;

---

---

## THE BALLAD OF THE BLACK FOX SKIN

---

But I laughed at them and their old squaw-  
tales. Ha! ha! I'm laughing still.

“For look ye, the skin—it's as smooth as  
sin, and black as the core of the Pit.  
By gun or by trap, whatever the hap, I  
swore I would capture it;  
By star and by star afield and afar, I  
hunted and would not quit.

“For the devil-fox it was swift and sly, and  
it seemed to flee at me;  
I would wake in fright by the camp-fire  
light, hearing its evil glee;  
Into my dream its eyes would gleam, and  
its shadow would I see.

“It sniffed and ran from the ptarmigan I  
had poisoned to excess;  
Unharm'd it sped from my wrathful lead  
(’twas as if I shot by guess);  
Yet it came by night in the stark moon-  
light to mock at my weariness.

“I tracked it up where the mountains hunch  
like the vertebrae of the world;  
I tracked it down to the death-still pits  
where the avalanche is hurled;  
From the glooms to the sacerdotal snows,  
where the carded clouds are curled.

---

## THE BALLAD OF THE BLACK FOX SKIN

---

"From vastitudes where the world pro-  
tudes through clouds like seas up-  
shoaled,  
I held its track till it led me back to the  
land I had left of old—  
The land I had looted many moons. I was  
weary and sick and cold.

"I was sick, soul-sick, of the futile chase,  
and there and then I swore  
The foul fiend fox might scathless go, for I  
would hunt no more;  
Then I rubbed mine eyes in a vast sur-  
prise—it stood by my cabin door.

"A rifle raised in the wraith-like gloom, and  
a vengeful shot that sped;  
A howl that would thrill a cream-faced  
corpse—and the demon fox lay dead  
Yet there was never a sign of wound, and  
never a drop he bled.

"So that was the end of the great black fox,  
and here is the prize I've won;  
And now for a drink to cheer me up—I've  
mushed since the early sun;  
We'll drink a toast to the sorry ghost of the  
fox whose race is run."

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## THE BALLAD OF THE BLACK FOX SKIN

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### II.

Now Claw-fingered Kitty and Windy Ike,  
bad as the worst were they;  
In their road-house down by the river-trail  
they waited and watched for prey;  
With wine and song they joyed night long,  
and they slept like swine by day.

For things were done in the Midnight Sun  
that no tongue will ever tell;  
And men there be who walk earth-free, but  
whose names are writ in hell—  
Are writ in flames with the guilty names of  
Fournier and Labelle.

Put not your trust in a poke of dust would  
ye sleep the sleep of sin;  
For there be those who would rob your  
clothes ere yet the dawn comes in;  
And a prize likewise in a woman's eyes is  
a peerless black fox skin.

Put your faith in the mountain cat if you  
lie within his lair;  
Trust the fangs of the mother-wolf, and  
the claws of the lead-ripped bear;  
But oh, of the wiles and the gold-tooth  
smiles of a dance-hall wench beware!



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## THE BALLAD OF THE BLACK FOX SKIN

---

Wherefore it was beyond all laws that lusts  
    of man restrain,  
A man drank deep and sank to sleep never  
    to wake again;  
And the Yukon swallowed through a hole  
    the cold corpse of the slain.

### III.

The black fox skin a shadow cast from the  
    roof nigh to the floor;  
And sleek it seemed and soft it gleamed,  
    and the woman stroked it o'er;  
And the man stood by with a brooding eye,  
    and gnashed his teeth and swore.

When thieves and thugs fall out and fight  
    there's fell arrears to pay;  
And soon or late sin meets its fate, and so  
    it fell one day  
That Claw-fingered Kitty and Windy Ike  
    fanged up like dogs at bay.

"The skin is mine, all mine," she cried; "I  
    did the deed alone."  
"It's share and share with a guilt-yoked  
    pair," he hissed in a pregnant tone;  
And so they snarled like malamutes over a  
    mildewed bone.



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## THE BALLAD OF THE BLACK FOX SKIN

---

And so they fought, by fear untaught, till  
haply it befell  
One dawn of day she slipped away to Dawson town to sell  
The fruit of sin, this black fox skin that had  
made their lives a hell.

She slipped away as still he lay, she  
clutched the wondrous fur;  
Her pulses beat, her foot was fleet, her fear  
was as a spur;  
She laughed with glee, she did not see him  
rise and follow her.

The bluffs uprear and grimly peer far over  
Dawson town;  
They see its lights a blaze o' nights and  
harshly they look down;  
They mock the plan and plot of man with  
grim, ironic frown.

The trail was steep; 'twas at the time when  
swiftly sinks the snow;  
All honeycombed, the river ice was rotting  
down below;  
The river chafed beneath its rind with many  
a mighty throe.

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## THE BALLAD OF THE BLACK FOX SKIN

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And up the swift and oozy drift a woman  
climbed in fear,  
Clutching to her a black fox fur as if she  
held it dear;  
And hard she pressed it to her breast—then  
Windy Ike drew near.

She made no moan—her heart was stone—  
she read his smiling face,  
And like a dream flashed all her life's dark  
horror and disgrace;  
A moment only—with a snarl he hurled her  
into space.

She rolled for nigh an hundred feet; she  
bounded like a ball;  
From crag to crag she carromed down  
through snow and timber fall; . . .  
A hole gaped in the river ice; the spray  
flashed—that was all.

A bird sang for the joy of spring, so  
piercing, sweet and frail;  
And blinding bright the land was dight in  
gay and glittering mail;  
And with a wondrous black fox skin a man  
slid down the trail.

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## THE BALLAD OF THE BLACK FOX SKIN

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### IV.

A wedge-faced man there was who ran  
along the river bank,  
Who stumbled through each drift and  
slough, and ever slipped and sank,  
And ever cursed his Maker's name, and  
ever "hooch" he drank.

He travelled like a hunted thing, hard  
harried, sore distress;  
The old grandmother moon crept out from  
her cloud-quilted nest;  
The aged mountains mocked at him in their  
primeval rest.

Grim shadows diapered the snow; the air  
was strangely mild;  
The valley's girth was dumb with mirth, the  
laughter of the wild;  
The still, sardonic laughter of an ogre o'er  
a child.

The river writhed beneath the ice; it  
groaned like one in pain,  
And yawning chasms opened wide, and  
closed and yawned again;  
And sheets of silver heaved on high until  
they split in twain.

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## THE BALLAD OF THE BLACK FOX SKIN

---

From out the road-house by the trail they  
saw a man afar  
Make for the narrow river-reach where the  
swift cross-currents are;  
Where, frail and worn, the ice is torn and  
the angry waters jar.

But they did not see him crash and sink  
into the icy flow;  
They did not see him clinging there,  
gripped by the undertow,  
Clawing with bleeding finger-nails at the  
jagged ice and snow.

They found a note beside the hole where he  
had stumbled in:  
"Here met his fate by evil luck a man who  
lived in sin,  
And to the one who loves me least I leave  
this black fox skin."

And strange it is; for, though they searched  
the river all around,  
No trace or sign of black fox skin was ever  
after found;  
Though one man said he saw the tread of  
*hoofs* deep in the ground.

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## THE BALLAD OF PIOUS PETE

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### THE BALLAD OF PIOUS PETE

*"The North has got him."—Yukonism.*

I TRIED to refine that neighbor of mine,  
honest to God, I did.  
I grieved for his fate, and early and late I  
watched over him like a kid.  
I gave him excuse, I bore his abuse in every  
way that I could;  
I swore to prevail; I camped on his trail;  
I plotted and planned for his good.  
By day and by night I strove in men's sight  
to gather him into the fold,  
With precept and prayer, with hope and  
despair, in hunger and hardship and  
cold.  
I followed him into Gehennas of sin, I sat  
where the sirens sit;  
In the shade of the Pole, for the sake of  
his soul, I strove with the powers of  
the Pit.  
I shadowed him down to the scrofulous  
town; I dragged him from dissolute  
brawls;  
But I killed the galoot when he started to  
shoot electricity into my walls.

---

## THE BALLAD OF PIOUS PETE

---

God knows what I did he should seek to be  
rid of one who would save him from  
shame.

God knows what I bore that night when  
he swore and bade me make tracks  
from his claim.

I started to tell of the horrors of hell, when  
sudden his eyes lit like coals;

And "Chuck it," says he, "don't persecute  
me with your cant and your saving  
of souls."

I'll swear I was mild as I'd be with a child,  
but he called me the son of a slut;

And, grabbing his gun with a leap and a  
run, he threatened my face with the  
butt.

So what could I do (I leave it to you)?  
With curses he harried me forth;

Then he was alone, and I was alone, and  
• over us menaced the North.

Our cabins were near; I could see, I could  
hear; but between us there rippled  
the creek;

And all summer through, with a rancor that  
grew, he would pass me and never  
would speak.

Then a shuddery breath like the coming of  
Death crept down from the peaks far  
away;



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## THE BALLAD OF PIOUS PETE

---

The water was still; the twilight was chill;  
the sky was a tatter of gray.

Swift came the Big Cold, and opal and gold  
the lights of the witches arose;

The frost-tyrant clinched, and the valley  
was cinched by the stark and  
cadaverous snows.

The trees were like lace where the star-  
beams could chase, each leaf was a  
jewel agleam.

The soft white hush lapped the Northland  
and wrapped us round in a crystal-  
line dream;

So still I could hear quite loud in my ear  
the swish of the pinions of time;

So bright I could see, as plain as could be,  
the wings of God's angels ashine.

As I read in the Book I would oftentimes  
look to that cabin just over the creek.

Ah me, it was sad and evil and bad, two  
neighbors who never would speak!

I knew that full well like a devil in hell he  
was hatching out, early and late,

A system to bear through the frost-spangled  
air the warm, crimson waves of his  
hate.

I only could peer and shudder and fear—  
'twas ever so ghastly and still;

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## THE BALLAD OF PIOUS PETE

---

But I knew over there in his lonely despair  
    he was plotting me terrible ill.  
I knew that he nursed a malice accurst, like  
    the blast of a winnowing flame;  
I pleaded aloud for a shield, for a shroud—  
    Oh, God! then calamity came.

Mad! If I'm mad then you too are mad;  
    but it's all in the point of view.  
If you'd looked at them things gallivantin'  
    on wings, all purple and green and  
    blue;  
If you'd notice them twist, as they  
    mounted and hissed like scorpions  
    dim in the dark;  
If you'd seen them rebound with a horrible  
    sound, and spitefully spitting a spark;  
If you'd watched *It* with dread, as it hissed  
    by your bed, that thing with the  
    feelers that crawls—  
You'd have settled the brute that attempted  
    to shoot electricity into your walls.

Oh, some they were blue, and they slithered  
    right through; they were silent and  
    squashy and round;  
And some they were green; they were  
    wriggly and lean; they writhed with  
    so hateful a sound

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## THE BALLAD OF PIOUS PETE

---

My blood seemed to freeze; I fell on my knees;  
my face was a white splash of dread.

Oh, the Green and the Blue, they were gruesome to view;  
but the worst of them all were the Red.

They came through the door, they came through the floor,  
they came through the moss-creviced logs.

They were savage and dire; they were whiskered with fire;  
they bickered like malamute dogs.

They ravined in rings like iniquitous things;  
they gulped down the Green and the Blue.

I crinkled with fear whene'er they drew near,  
and nearer and nearer they drew.

And then came the crown of Horror's grim crown,  
the monster so loathsomely red.

Each eye was a pin that shot out and in, as,  
squid-like, it oozed to my bed;

So softly it crept with feelers that swept  
and quivered like fine copper wire;

Its belly was white with a sulphurous light,  
its jaws were a-drooling with fire.

It came and it came; I could breathe of its flame,  
but never a wink could I look.

---

## THE BALLAD OF PIOUS PETE

---

I thrust in its maw the Fount of the Law;  
I fended it off with the Book.  
I was weak—oh, so weak—but I thrilled at  
its shriek, as wildly it fled in the  
night;  
And deathlike I lay till the dawn of the day.  
(Was ever so welcome the light?)

I loaded my gun at the rise of the sun; to  
his cabin so softly I slunk.  
My neighbor was there in the frost-  
freighted air, all wrapped in a robe in  
his bunk.  
It muffled his moans; it outlined his bones,  
as feebly he twisted about;  
His gums were so black, and his lips seemed  
to crack, and his teeth all were  
loosening out.  
'Twas a death's head that peered through  
the tangle of beard; 'twas a face I  
will never forget;  
Sunk eyes full of woe, and they troubled  
me so with their pleadings and  
anguish, and yet  
As I rested my gaze in a misty amaze on  
the scurvy-degenerate wreck,  
I thought of the Things with the dragon-  
fly wings, then laid I my gun on his  
neck.

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## THE BALLAD OF PIOUS PETE

---

He gave out a cry that was faint as a sigh,  
like a perishing malamute,  
And he says unto me, 'I'm converted," says  
he; "for Christ's sake, Peter, don't  
shoot!"

\* \* \* \* \*

They're taking me out with an escort about,  
and under a sergeant's care;  
I am humbled indeed, for I'm 'cuffed to  
a Swede that thinks he's a mil-  
lionaire.  
But it's all Gospel true what I'm telling to  
you—up there where the Shadow  
falls—  
That I settled Sam Noot when he started  
to shoot electricity into my walls.

---

## THE BALLAD OF BLASPHEMOUS BILL

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### THE BALLAD OF BLASPHEMOUS BILL

I TOOK a contract to bury the body of  
blasphemous Bill MacKie,  
Whenever, wherever or whatsoever the  
manner of death he die—  
Whether he die in the light o' day or under  
the peak-faced moon;  
In cabin or dance-hall, camp or dive, muck-  
lucks or patent shoon;  
On velvet tundra or virgin peak, by glacier,  
drift or draw;  
In muskeg hollow or canyon gloom, by  
avalanche, fang or claw;  
By battle, murder or sudden wealth, by  
pestilence, "hooch" or lead—  
I swore on the Book I would follow and  
look till I found my tombless dead.

For Bill was a dainty kind of cuss, and his  
mind was mighty sot  
On a dinky patch with flowers and grass  
in a civilized bone-yard lot.  
And where he died or how he died, it  
didn't matter a damn



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## THE BALLAD OF BLASPHEMOUS BILL

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So long as he had a grave with frills and a  
tombstone "epigram."

So I promised him, and he paid the price  
in good cheechako coin.

(Which the same I blowed in that very  
night down in the Tenderloin).

Then I painted a three-foot slab of pine:  
"Here lies poor Bill MacKie,"

And I hung it up on my cabin wall and I  
waited for Bill to die.

Years passed away, and at last one day  
came a squaw with a story strange,

Of a long-deserted line of traps 'way back  
of the Bighorn range;

Of a little hut by the great divide, and a  
white man stiff and still,

Lying there by his lonesome self, and I  
figured it must be Bill,

So I thought of the contract I'd made with  
him, and I took down from the shelf

The swell black box with the silver plate  
he'd picked out for hisself;

And I packed it full of grub and "hooch,"  
and I slung it on the sleigh;

Then I harnessed up my team of dogs and  
was off at dawn of day.

---

## THE BALLAD OF BLASPHEMOUS BILL

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You know what it's like in the Yukon wild  
when it's sixty-nine below;  
When the ice-worms wriggle their purple  
heads through the crust of the pale  
blue snow;  
When the pine-trees crack like little guns in  
the silence of the wood,  
And the icicles hang down like tusks under  
the parka hood;  
When the stove-pipe smoke breaks sudden  
off, and the sky is weirdly lit,  
And the careless feel of a bit of steel burns  
like a red-hot spit;  
When the mercury is a frozen ball, and the  
frost-fiend stalks to kill—  
Well, it was just like that that day when I  
set out to look for Bill.

Oh, the awful hush that seemed to crush  
me down on every hand,  
As I blundered blind with a trail to find  
through that blank and bitter land;  
Half dazed, half crazed in the winter wild,  
with its grim, heart-breaking woes,  
And the ruthless strife for a grip on life  
that only the sourdough knows!  
North by the compass, north I pressed;  
river and peak and plain  
Passed like a dream I slept to lose and I  
waked to dream again.

---

## THE BALLAD OF BLASPHEMOUS BILL

---

River and plain and mighty peak—and who  
    could stand unawed  
As their summits blazed, he could stand  
    undazed at the foot of the throne of  
    God.  
North, aye, north, through a land accurst,  
    shunned by the scouring brutes,  
And all I heard was my own harsh word  
    and the whine of the malamutes,  
Till at last I came to a cabin squat, built  
    in the side of a hill,  
And I burst in the door, and there on the  
    floor, frozen to death, lay Bill.

Ice, white ice, like a winding-sheet, sheath-  
    ing each smoke-grimed wall;  
Ice on the stove-pipe, ice on the bed, ice  
    gleaming over all;  
Sparkling ice on the dead man's chest, glit-  
    tering ice in his hair,  
Ice on his fingers, ice in his heart, ice in  
    his glassy stare;  
Hard as a log and trussed like a frog, with  
    his arms and legs outspread.  
I gazed at the coffin I'd brought for him,  
    and I gazed at the gruesome dead,  
And at last I spoke: "Bill liked his joke;  
    but still, goldarn his eyes,  
A man had ought to consider his mates in  
    the way he goes and dies."

---

## THE BALLAD OF BLASPHEMOUS BILL

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Have you ever stood in an Arctic hut in  
the shadow of the Pole,  
With a little coffin six by three and a grief  
you can't control?  
Have you ever sat by a frozen corpse that  
looks at you with a grin,  
And that seems to say: "You may try all  
day, but you'll never jam me in"?  
I'm not a man of the quitting kind, but I  
never felt so blue  
As I sat there gazing at that stiff and study-  
ing what I'd do.  
Then I rose and I kicked off the husky dogs  
that were nosing round about,  
And I lit a roaring fire in the stove, and I  
started to thaw Bill out.

Well, I thawed and thawed for thirteen  
days, but it didn't seem no good;  
His arms and legs stuck out like pegs, as if  
they was made of wood.  
Till at last I said: "It ain't no use—he's  
froze too hard to thaw;  
He's obstinate, and he won't lie straight,  
so I guess I got to—*saw*."  
So I sawed off poor Bill's arms and legs,  
and I laid him snug and straight  
In the little coffin he picked hisself, with  
the dinky silver plate;

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## THE BALLAD OF BLASPHEMOUS BILL

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And I came nigh near to shedding a tear as  
    I nailed him safely down;  
Then I stowed him away in my Yukon  
    sleigh, and I started back to town.

So I buried him as the contract was in a  
    narrow grave and deep,  
And there he's waiting the Great Clean-up,  
    when the Judgment sluice-heads  
    sweep;  
And I smoke my pipe and I meditate in the  
    light of the Midnight Sun,  
And sometimes I wonder if they *was*, the  
    awful things I done.  
And as I sit and the parson talks, expound-  
    ing of the Law,  
I often think of poor old Bill—*and how*  
    *hard he was to saw.*

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## THE BALLAD OF ONE-EYED MIKE

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### THE BALLAD OF ONE-EYED MIKE

*THIS is the tale that was told to me by the  
man with the crystal eye,  
As I smoked my pipe in the camp-fire light,  
and the Glories swept the sky;  
As the Northlights gleamed and curved and  
streamed, and the bottle of "hooch"  
was dry.*

A man once aimed that my life be shamed,  
and wrought me a deathly wrong;  
I vowed one day I would well repay, but the  
heft of his hate was strong.  
He thonged me east and he thonged me  
west; he harried me back and forth,  
Till I fled in fright from his peerless spite  
to the bleak, bald-headed North.

And there I lay, and for many a day I  
hatched plan after plan,  
For a golden haul of the wherewithal to  
crush and to kill my man;  
And there I strove, and there I clove  
through the drift of icy streams;  
And there I fought, and there I sought for  
the pay-streak of my dreams.



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## THE BALLAD OF ONE-EYED MIKE

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So twenty years, with their hopes and fears  
and smiles and tears and such,  
Went by and left me long bereft of hope of  
the Midas touch;  
About as fat as a chancel rat, and lo!  
despite my will,  
In the weary fight I had clean lost sight of  
the man I sought to kill.

'Twas so far away, that evil day when I  
prayed the Prince of Gloom  
For the savage strength and the sullen  
length of life to work his doom.  
Nor sign nor word had I seen or heard,  
and it happed so long ago;  
My youth was gone and my memory wan,  
and I willed it even so.

It fell one night in the waning light by the  
Yukon's oily flow,  
I smoked and sat as I marvelled at the  
sky's portwiney glow;  
Till it paled away to an absinthe gray, and  
the river seemed to shrink,  
All wobbly flakes and wriggling snakes and  
goblin eyes a-wink.

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## THE BALLAD OF ONE-EYED MIKE

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'Twas weird to see and it 'wildered me in a  
queer, hypnotic dream,  
Till I saw a spot like an inky blot come  
floating down the stream;  
It bobbed and swung; it sheered and hung;  
it romped round in a ring;  
It seemed to play in a tricksome way; it  
sure was a merry thing.

In freakish flights strange oily lights came  
fluttering round its head,  
Like butterflies of a monster size—then I  
knew it for the Dead.  
Its face was rubbed and slicked and  
scrubbed as smooth as a shaven pate;  
In the silver snakes that the water makes  
it gleamed like a dinner-plate.

It gurgled near, and clear and clear and  
large and large it grew;  
It stood upright in a ring of light and it  
looked me through and through.  
It weltered round with a woozy sound, and  
ere I could retreat,  
With the witless roll of a sodden soul it  
wantoned to my feet.

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## THE BALLAD OF ONE-EYED MIKE

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And here I swear by this cross I wear, I  
heard that "floater" say:

"I am the man from whom you ran, the  
man you sought to slay.

That you may note and gaze and gloat, and  
say 'Revenge is sweet,'

In the grit and grime of the river's slime I  
am rotting at your feet.

"The ill we rue we must e'en undo, though  
it rive us bone from bone;

So it came about that I sought you out, for  
I prayed I might atone.

I did you wrong, and for long and long I  
sought where you might live;

And now you're found, though I'm dead  
and drowned, I beg you to forgive."

So sad it seemed, and its cheek-bones  
gleamed, and its fingers flicked the  
shore;

And it lapped and lay in a weary way, and  
its hands met to implore;

That I gently said: "Poor, restless dead, I  
would never work you woe;

Though the wrong you rue you can ne'er  
undo, I forgave you long ago."

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## THE BALLAD OF ONE-EYED MIKE

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Then, wonder-wise, I rubbed my eyes and  
I woke from a horrid dream.  
The moon rode high in the naked sky, and  
something bobbed in the stream.  
It held my sight in a patch of light, and  
then it sheered from the shore;  
It dipped and sank by a hollow bank, and I  
never saw it more.

*This was the tale he told to me, the man so  
warped and gray,  
Ere he slept and dreamed, and the camp-  
fire gleamed in his eye in a wolfish  
way—  
That crystal eye that raked the sky in the  
weird Auroral ray.*

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## THE BALLAD OF THE BRAND

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### THE BALLAD OF THE BRAND

'Twas up in a land long famed for gold,  
where women were far and rare,  
Tellus, the smith, had taken to wife a  
maiden amazingly fair;  
Tellus, the brawny worker in iron, hairy  
and heavy of hand,  
Saw her and loved her and bore her away  
from the tribe of a Southern land;  
Deeming her worthy to queen his home  
and mother him little ones,  
That the name of Tellus, the master smith,  
might live in his stalwart sons.

Now there was little of law in the land, and  
evil doings were rife,  
And every man who joyed in his home  
guarded the fame of his wife;  
For there were those of the silver tongue  
and the honeyed art to beguile,  
Who would cozen the heart from a  
woman's breast and damn her soul  
with a smile.

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## THE BALLAD OF THE BRAND

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And there were women too quick to heed a  
look or a whispered word,  
And once in a while a man was slain, and  
the ire of the King was stirred;  
So far and wide he proclaimed his wrath,  
and this was the law he willed:  
“That whosoever killeth a man, even shall  
he be killed.”

Now Tellus, the smith, he trusted his wife;  
his heart was empty of fear.  
High on the hill was the gleam of their  
hearth, a beacon of love and cheer.  
High on the hill they builded their bower,  
where the broom and the bracken  
meet;  
Under a grove of oaks it was, hushed and  
drowsily sweet.  
Here he enshrined her, his dearest saint, his  
idol, the light of his eye;  
Her kisses rested upon his lips as brushes a  
butterfly.  
The weight of her arms around his neck  
was light as the thistledown;  
And sweetly she studied to win his smile,  
and gently she mocked his frown.  
And when at the close of the dusty day his  
clangorous toil was done,  
She hastened to meet him down the way all  
lit by the amber sun.

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## THE BALLAD OF THE BRAND

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Their dove-cot gleamed in the golden light,  
a temple of stainless love;  
Like the hanging cup of a big blue flower  
was the topaz sky above.  
The roses and lilies yearned to her, as swift  
through their throng she pressed;  
A little white, fragile, fluttering thing that  
lay like a child on his breast.  
Then the heart of Tellus, the smith, was  
proud, and sang for the joy of life,  
And there in the bronzing summertide he  
thanked the gods for his wife.

Now there was one called Philo, a scribe, a  
man of exquisite grace,  
Carved like the god Apollo in limb, fair as  
Adonis in face;  
Eager and winning of manner, full of such  
radiant charm,  
Womankind fought for his favor and loved  
to their uttermost harm.  
Such was his craft and his knowledge, such  
was his skill at the game,  
Never was woman could flout him, so be he  
plotted her shame.  
And so he drank deep of pleasure, and then  
it fell on a day  
He gazed on the wife of Tellus and marked  
her out for his prey.

---

## THE BALLAD OF THE BRAND

---

Tellus, the smith, was merry, and the time  
    of the year it was June,  
So he said to his stalwart helpers: "Shut  
    down the forge at noon.  
Go ye and joy in the sunshine, rest in the  
    coolth of the grove,  
Drift on the dreamy river, every man with  
    his love."  
Then to himself: "Oh, Beloved, sweet will  
    be your surprise;  
To-day will we sport like children, laugh in  
    each other's eyes;  
Weave gay garlands of poppies, crown each  
    other with flowers,  
Pull plump carp from the lilies, rifle the  
    ferny bowers.  
To-day with feasting and gladness the wine  
    of Cyprus will flow;  
To-day is the day we were wedded only a  
    twelvemonth ago."

The larks trilled high in the heavens; his  
    heart was lyric with joy;  
He plucked a posy of lilies; he sped like a  
    love-sick boy.  
He stole up the velvety pathway—his cot-  
    tage was sunsteeped and still;



---

## THE BALLAD OF THE BRAND

---

Vines honeysuckled the window; softly he  
    peeped o'er the sill.  
The lilies dropped from his fingers; devils  
    were choking his breath;  
Rigid with horror, he stiffened; ghastly his  
    face was as death.  
Like a nun whose faith in the Virgin is  
    met with a prurient jibe,  
He shrank—'twas the wife of his bosom in  
    the arms of Philo, the scribe.

Tellus went back to his smithy; he reeled  
    like a drunken man;  
His heart was riven with anguish; his  
    brain was brooding a plan.  
Straight to his anvil he hurried; started his  
    furnace aglow;  
Heated his iron and shaped it with savage  
    and masterful blow.  
Sparks showered over and round him;  
    swiftly under his hand  
There at last it was finished—a hideous and  
    infamous Brand.

That night the wife of his bosom, the light  
    of joy in her eyes,  
Kissed him with words of rapture; but he  
    knew that her words were lies.

---

## THE BALLAD OF THE BRAND

---

Never was she so beguiling, never so merry  
of speech

(For passion ripens a woman as the sun-  
shine ripens a peach).

He clenched his teeth into silence; he  
yielded up to her lure,

Though he knew that her breasts were  
heaving from the fire of her para-  
mour.

“To-morrow,” he said, “to-morrow”—he  
wove her hair in a strand,

Twisted it round his fingers and smiled as  
he thought of the Brand.

The morrow was come, and Tellus swiftly  
stole up the hill.

Butterflies drowsed in the noon-heat;  
coverts were sunsteeped and still.

Softly he padded the pathway unto the  
porch, and within

Heard he the low laugh of dalliance, heard  
he the rapture of sin.

Knew he her eyes were mystic with light  
that no man should see,

No man kindle and joy in, no man on  
earth save he.

And never for him would it kindle. The  
blood-lust surged in his brain;

---

## THE BALLAD OF THE BRAND

---

Through the senseless stone could he see  
    them, wanton and warily fain.  
Horrible! Heaven he sought for, gained it  
    and gloried and fell—  
Oh, it was sudden—headlong into the  
    nethermost hell. . . .

Was this he, Tellus, this marble? Tellus  
    . . . not dreaming a dream?  
Ah! sharp-edged as a javelin, was that a  
    woman's scream?  
Was it a door that shattered, shell-like,  
    under his blow?  
Was it his saint, that strumpet, dishevelled  
    and cowering low?  
Was it her lover, that wild thing, that  
    twisted and gouged and tore?  
Was it a man he was crushing, whose head  
    he beat on the floor?  
Laughing the while at its weakness, till  
    sudden he stayed his hand—  
Through the red ring of his madness  
    flamed the thought of the Brand.

Then bound he the naked Philo with thongs  
    that cut in the flesh,  
And the wife of his bosom, fear-frantic, he  
    gagged with a silken mesh,

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---

## THE BALLAD OF THE BRAND

---

Choking her screams into silence; bound  
her down by the hair;  
Dragged her lover unto her under her  
frenzied stare.  
In the heat of the hearth-fire embers he  
heated the hideous Brand;  
Twisting her fingers open, he forced its haft  
in her hand.  
He pressed it downward and downward;  
she felt the living flesh sear;  
She saw the throe of her lover; she heard  
the scream of his fear.  
Once, twice and thrice he forced her, heed-  
less of prayer and shriek—  
Once on the forehead of Philo, twice in the  
soft of his cheek.  
Then (for the thing was finished) he said  
to the woman: "See  
How you have branded your lover! Now  
will I let him go free."  
He severed the thongs that bound him,  
laughing: "Revenge is sweet,"  
And Philo, sobbing in anguish, feebly rose  
to his feet.  
The man who was fair as Apollo, god-like  
in woman's sight,  
Hideous now as a satyr, fled to the pity of  
night.

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## THE BALLAD OF THE BRAND

---

*Then came they before the Judgment Seat,  
and thus spoke the Lord of the  
Land:*

*"He who seeketh his neighbor's wife shall  
suffer the doom of the Brand.*

*Brutish and bold on his brow be it  
stamped, deep in his cheek let it sear,  
That every man may look on his shame,  
and shudder and sicken and fear.*

*He shall hear their mock in the market-  
place, their fleering jibe at the feast;  
He shall seek the caves and the shroud of  
night, and the fellowship of the  
beast.*

*Outcast forever from homes of men, far  
and far shall he roam.*

*Such be the doom, sadder than death, of  
him who shameth a home."*

---

## THE BALLAD OF HARD-LUCK HENRY

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### THE BALLAD OF HARD-LUCK HENRY

Now wouldn't you expect to find a man an  
    awful crank  
That's staked out nigh three hundred  
    claims, and every one a blank;  
That's followed every fool stampede, and  
    seen the rise and fall  
Of camps where men got gold in chunks  
    and he got none at all;  
That's prospected a bit of ground and sold  
    it for a song  
To see it yield a fortune to some fool that  
    came along;  
That's sunk a dozen bed-rock holes, and  
    not a speck in sight,  
Yet sees them take a million from the  
    claims to left and right?  
Now aren't things like that enough to  
    drive a man to booze?  
But Hard-Luck Smith was hoodoo-proof—  
    he knew the way to lose.

'Twas in the fall of nineteen four—leap-  
    year I've heard them say—  
When Hard-Luck came to Hunker Creek  
    and took a hillside lay.  
And lo! as if to make amends for all the  
    futile past,



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## THE BALLAD OF HARD-LUCK HENRY

---

Late in the year he struck it rich, the real  
paystreak at last.  
The riffles of his sluicing-box were choked  
with speckled earth,  
And night and day he worked that lay for  
all that he was worth.  
And when in chill December's gloom his  
lucky lease expired,  
He found that he had made a stake as big  
as he desired.

One day while meditating on the wayward-  
ness of fate,  
He felt the ache of lonely man to find a  
fitting mate;  
A petticoated pard to cheer his solitary life,  
A woman with soft, soothing ways, a con-  
fidant, a wife.  
And while he cooked his supper on his little  
Yukon stove,  
He wished that he had staked a claim in  
Love's rich treasure-trove;  
When suddenly he paused and held aloft a  
Yukon egg,  
For there in pencilled letters was the magic  
name of Peg.



---

## THE BALLAD OF HARD-LUCK HENRY

---

You know these Yukon eggs of ours—some  
pink, some green, some blue—  
A dollar per, assorted tints, assorted flavors,  
too.  
The supercilious cheechako might designate  
them high,  
But one acquires a taste for them and likes  
them by-and-by.  
Well, Hard-Luck Henry took this egg and  
held it to the light,  
And there was more faint pencilling that  
sorely taxed his sight.  
At last he made it out, and then the legend  
ran like this—  
“Will Klondike miner write to Peg, Plum-  
hollow, Squashville, Wis.?”

That night he got to thinking of this far-  
off, unknown fair;  
It seemed so sort of opportune, an answer  
to his prayer.  
She flitted sweetly through his dreams, she  
haunted him by day,  
She smiled through clouds of nicotine, she  
cheered his weary way.  
At last he yielded to the spell; his course  
of love he set—  
Wisconsin his objective point; his object,  
Margaret.

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## THE BALLAD OF HARD-LUCK HENRY

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With every mile of sea and land his longing  
grew and grew.  
He practised all his pretty words, and  
these, I fear, were few.  
At last, one frosty evening, with a cold chill  
down his spine,  
He found himself before her house, the  
threshold of the shrine.  
His courage flickered to a spark, then  
glowed with sudden flame—  
He knocked; he heard a welcome word;  
she came—his goddess came.  
Oh, she was fair as any flower, and huskily  
he spoke:  
“I’m all the way from Klondike, with a  
mighty heavy poke.  
I’m looking for a lassie, one whose Chris-  
tian name is Peg,  
Who sought a Klondike miner, and who  
wrote it on an egg.”

The lassie gazed at him a space, her cheeks  
grew rosy red;  
She gazed at him with tear-bright eyes,  
then tenderly she said:  
“Yes, lonely Klondike miner, it is true my  
name is Peg.  
It’s also true I longed for you and wrote it  
on an egg.”

---

## THE BALLAD OF HARD-LUCK HENRY

---

My heart went out to someone in that land  
of night and cold;  
But oh, I fear that Yukon egg must have  
been mighty old.  
I waited long, I hoped and feared; you  
should have come before;  
I've been a wedded woman now for eighteen  
months or more.  
I'm sorry, since you've come so far, you  
ain't the one that wins;  
But won't you take a step inside—I'll let  
*you see the twins."*

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## THE BALLAD OF GUM-BOOT BEN

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### THE BALLAD OF GUM-BOOT BEN

*HE was an old prospector with a vision  
bleared and dim.  
He asked me for a grubstake, and the  
same I gave to him.  
He hinted of a hidden trove, and when I  
made so bold  
To question his veracity, this is the tale  
he told.*

"I do not seek the copper streak, nor yet  
the yellow dust;  
I am not fain for sake of gain to irk the  
frozen crust;  
Let fellows gross find gilded dross, far  
other is my mark;  
Oh, gentle youth, this is the truth—I go  
to seek the Ark.

"I prospected the Pelly bed, I prospected  
the White;  
The Nordenscöld for love of gold I piked  
from morn till night;  
Afar and near for many a year I led the  
wild stampede,  
Until I guessed that all my quest was  
vanity and greed.

---

## THE BALLAD OF GUM-BOOT BEN

---

"Then came I to a land I knew no man  
    had ever seen,  
A haggard land, forlornly spanned by  
    mountains lank and lean;  
The nitchies said 'twas full of dread, of  
    smoke and fiery breath,  
And no man dare put foot in there for  
    fear of pain and death.

"But I was made all unafraid, so, careless  
    and alone,  
Day after day I made my way into that  
    land unknown;  
Night after night by camp-fire light I  
    crouched in lonely thought;  
Oh, gentle youth, this is the truth—I knew  
    not what I sought.

"I rose at dawn; I wandered on. 'Tis  
    somewhat fine and grand  
To be alone and hold your own in God's  
    vast awesome land;  
Come woe or weal, 'tis fine to feel a hun-  
    dred miles between  
The trails you dare and pathways where  
    the feet of men have been.

---

## THE BALLAD OF GUM-BOOT BEN

---

“And so it fell on me a spell of wander-  
lust was cast.

The land was still and strange and chill,  
and cavernous and vast;

And sad and dead, and dull as lead, the  
valleys sought the snows;

And far and wide on every side the ashen  
peaks arose.

“The moon was like a silent spike that  
pierced the sky right through;

The small stars popped and winked and  
hopped in vastitudes of blue;

And unto me for company came creatures  
of the shade,

And formed in rings and whispered things  
that made me half afraid.

“And strange though be, 'twas borne on  
me that land had lived of old,

And men had crept and slain and slept  
where now they toiled for gold;

Through jungles dim the mammoth grim  
had sought the oozy fen,

And on his track, all bent of back, had  
crawled the hairy men.

---

## THE BALLAD OF GUM-BOOT BEN

---

“And furthermore, strange deeds of yore  
in this dead place were done.  
They haunted me, as wild and free I  
roamed from sun to sun;  
Until I came where sudden flame uplit a  
terraced height,  
A regnant peak that seemed to seek the  
coronal of night.

“I scaled the peak; my heart was weak,  
yet on and on I pressed.  
Skyward I strained until I gained its  
dazzling silver crest;  
And there I found, with all around a  
world supine and stark,  
Swept clean of snow, a flat plateau, and  
on it lay—the Ark.

“Yes, there, I knew, by two and two the  
beasts did disembark,  
And so in haste I ran and traced in let-  
ters on the Ark  
My human name—Ben Smith’s the same.  
And now I want to float  
A syndicate to haul and freight to town  
that noble boat.”



---

## THE BALLAD OF GUM-BOOT BEN

---

*I met him later in a bar and made a gay  
    remark  
Anent an ancient miner and an option on  
    the Ark.  
He gazed at me reproachfully, as only  
    topers can;  
But what he said I can't repeat—he was a  
    bad old man.*

---

## THE MAN FROM ELDORADO

---

### THE MAN FROM ELDORADO

He's the man from Eldorado, and he's just  
arrived in town,

In moccasins and oily buckskin shirt.

He's gaunt as any Indian, and pretty nigh  
as brown;

He's greasy, and he smells of sweat and  
dirt.

He sports a crop of whiskers that would  
shame a healthy hog;

Hard work has racked his joints and  
stooped his back;

He slops along the sidewalk followed by his  
yellow dog,

But he's got a bunch of gold-dust in his  
sack.

He seems a little wistful as he blinks at all  
the lights,

And maybe he is thinking of his claim

And the dark and dwarfish cabin where he  
lay and dreamed at nights,

(Thank God, he'll never see the place  
again!)

Where he lived on tinned tomatoes, beef  
embalmed and sourdough bread,

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---

## THE MAN FROM ELDORADO

---

On rusty beans and bacon furred with  
mould;  
His stomach's out of kilter and his system  
full of lead,  
But it's over, and his poke is full of gold.

He has panted at the windlass, he has  
loaded in the drift,

He has pounded at the face of oozy clay;  
He has taxed himself to sickness, dark and  
damp and double shift,

He has labored like a demon night and  
day.

And now, praise God, it's over, and he  
seems to breathe again

Of new-mown hay, the warm, wet,  
friendly loam;

He sees a snowy orchard in a green and  
dimpling plain,

And a little vine-clad cottage, and it's—  
Home.

### II.

He's the man from Eldorado, and he's had  
a bite and sup,

And he's met in with a drouthy friend or  
two;

---

## THE MAN FROM ELDORADO

---

He's cached away his gold-dust, but he's  
sort of bucking up,

So he's kept enough to-night to see him  
through.

His eye is bright and genial, his tongue no  
longer lags;

His heart is brimming o'er with joy and  
mirth;

He may be far from savory, he may be clad  
in rags,

But to-night he feels as if he owns the  
earth.

Says he: "Boys, here is where the shaggy  
North and I will shake;

I thought I'd never manage to get free.

I kept on making misses; but at last I've got  
my stake;

There's no more thawing frozen muck for  
me.

I am going to God's Country, where I'll live  
the simple life;

I'll buy a bit of land and make a start;

I'll carve a little homestead, and I'll win a  
little wife,

And raise ten little kids to cheer my  
heart."

---

## THE MAN FROM ELDORADO

---

They signified their sympathy by crowding  
to the bar ;

They bellied up three deep and drank his  
health.

He shed a radiant smile around and smoked  
a rank cigar ;

They wished him honor, happiness and  
wealth.

They drank unto his wife to be—that unsus-  
pecting maid ;

They drank unto his children half a  
score ;

And when they got through drinking, very  
tenderly they laid

The man from Eldorado on the floor.

### III.

He's the man from Eldorado, and he's only  
starting in

To cultivate a thousand-dollar jag.

His poke is full of gold-dust and his heart  
is full of sin,

And he's dancing with a girl called Muck-  
luck Mag.

She's as light as any fairy ; she's as pretty  
as a peach ;

She's mistress of the witchcraft to be-  
guile ;

---

## THE MAN FROM ELDORADO

---

There's sunshine in her manner, there is  
music in her speech,  
And there's concentrated honey in her  
smile.

Oh, the fever of the dance-hall and the  
glitter and the shine,  
The beauty, and the jewels, and the  
whirl,  
The madness of the music, the rapture of  
the wine,  
The languorous allurements of a girl!  
She is like a lost madonna; he is gaunt,  
unkempt and grim;  
But she fondles him and gazes in his  
eyes;  
Her kisses seek his heavy lips, and soon it  
seems to him  
He has staked a little claim in Paradise.

"Who's for a juicy-two-step?" cries the  
master of the floor;  
The music throbs with soft, seductive  
beat.  
There's glitter, gilt and gladness; there are  
pretty girls galore;  
There's a woolly man with moccasins on  
feet.

---

## THE MAN FROM ELDORADO

---

They know they've got him going; he is  
  buying wine for all;  
  They crowd around as buzzards at a  
  feast,  
Then when his poke is empty they boost  
  him from the hall,  
And spurn him in the gutter like a beast.

He's the man from Eldorado, and he's  
  painting red the town;  
  Behind he leaves a trail of yellow dust;  
In a whirl of senseless riot he is ramping  
  up and down;  
  There's nothing checks his madness and  
  his lust.  
And soon the word is passed around—it  
  travels like a flame;  
  They fight to clutch his hand and call him  
  friend,  
The chevaliers of lost repute, the dames of  
  sorry fame;  
  Then comes the grim awakening—the  
  end.

### IV.

He's the man from Eldorado, and he gives  
  a grand affair;  
  There's feasting, dancing, wine without  
  restraint.



---

## THE MAN FROM ELDORADO

---

The smooth Beau Brummels of the bar, the  
faro men, are there;

The tinhorns and purveyors of red paint;  
The sleek and painted women, their pre-  
dacious eyes aglow—

Sure Klondike City never saw the like;  
Then Muckluck Mag proposed the toast,  
“The giver of the show,  
The livest sport that ever hit the pike.”

The “live one” rises to his feet; he stam-  
mers to reply—

And then there comes before his muddled  
brain

A vision of green vastitudes beneath an  
April sky,

And clover pastures drenched with silver  
rain.

He knows that it can never be, that he is  
down and out;

Life leers at him with foul and fetid  
breath;

And then amid the revelry, the song and  
cheer and shout,

He suddenly grows grim and cold as  
death.

---

## THE MAN FROM ELDORADO

---

He grips the table tensely, and he says:  
"Dear friends of mine,  
I've let you dip your fingers in my purse;  
I've crammed you at my table, and I've  
drowned you in my wine,  
And I've little left to give you but—my  
curse.  
I've failed supremely in my plans; it's  
rather late to whine;  
My poke is mighty weasened up and  
small.  
I thank you each for coming here; the hap-  
piness is mine—  
And now, you thieves and harlots, take it  
all."

He twists the thong from off his poke; he  
swings it o'er his head;  
The nuggets fall around their feet like  
grain.  
They rattle over roof and wall; they  
scatter, roll and spread;  
The dust is like a shower of golden rain.  
The guests a moment stand aghast, then  
grovel on the floor;  
They fight, and snarl, and claw, like  
beasts of prey;  
And then, as everybody grabbed and every-  
body swore,  
The man from Eldorado slipped away.

---

---

## THE MAN FROM ELDORADO

---

He's the man from Eldorado, and they  
found him stiff and dead,  
Half covered by the freezing ooze and  
dirt.  
A clotted Colt was in his hand, a hole was  
in his head,  
And he wore an old and oily buckskin  
shirt.  
His eyes were fixed and horrible, as one  
who hails the end;  
The frost had set him rigid as a log;  
And there, half lying on his breast, his last  
and only friend,  
There crouched and whined a mangy  
yellow dog.

---

## MY FRIENDS

---

### MY FRIENDS

THE man above was a murderer, the man  
below was a thief;  
And I lay there in the bunk between, ailing  
beyond belief;  
A weary armful of skin and bone, wasted  
with pain and grief.

My feet were froze, and the lifeless toes  
were purple and green and gray;  
The little flesh that clung to my bones, you  
could punch it in holes like clay;  
The skin on my gums was a sullen black,  
and slowly peeling away.

I was sure enough in a direful fix, and  
often I wondered why  
They did not take the chance that was left  
and leave me alone to die,  
Or finish me off with a dose of dope—so  
utterly lost was I.

But no; they brewed me the green-spruce  
tea, and nursed me there like a child;  
And the homicide he was good to me, and  
bathed my sores and smiled;  
And the thief he starved that I might be  
fed, and his eyes were kind and mild.

---

---

## MY FRIENDS

---

Yet they were woefully wicked men, and  
often at night in pain  
I heard the murderer speak of his deed  
and dream it over again;  
I heard the poor thief sorrowing for the  
dead self he had slain.

I'll never forget that bitter dawn, so evil,  
askew and gray,  
When they wrapped me round in the skins  
of beasts and they bore me to a  
sleigh,  
And we started out with the nearest post  
an hundred miles away.

I'll never forget the trail they broke, with  
its tense, unuttered woe;  
And the crunch, crunch, crunch as their  
snowshoes sank through the crust of  
the hollow snow;  
And my breath would fail, and every beat  
of my heart was like a blow.

And oftentimes I would die the death, yet  
wake up to life anew;  
The sun would be all ablaze on the waste,  
and the sky a blighting blue,  
And the tears would rise in my snow-blind  
eyes and furrow my cheeks like dew.

---

## MY FRIENDS

---

And the camps we made when their  
strength outplayed and the day was  
pinched and wan;  
And oh, the joy of that blessed halt, and  
how I did dread the dawn;  
And how I hated the weary men who rose  
and dragged me on.

And oh, how I begged to rest, to rest—  
the snow was so sweet a shroud;  
And oh, how I cried when they urged me  
on, cried and cursed them aloud;  
Yet on they strained, all racked and pained,  
and sorely their backs were bowed.

And then it was all like a lurid dream, and  
I prayed for a swift release  
From the ruthless ones who would not  
leave me to die alone in peace;  
Till I wakened up and I found myself at  
the post of the Mounted Police.

And there was my friend the murderer, and  
there was my friend the thief,  
With bracelets of steel around their wrists,  
and wicked beyond belief:  
But when they come to God's judgment  
seat—may I be allowed the brief.

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## THE PROSPECTOR

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### THE PROSPECTOR

I STROLLED up old Bonanza, where I staked  
    in ninety-eight,  
    A-purpose to revisit the old claim.  
I kept thinking mighty sadly of the funny  
    ways of Fate,  
    And the lads who once were with me in  
    the game.  
Poor boys, they're down-and-outers, and  
    there's scarcely one to-day  
    Can show a dozen colors in his poke;  
And me, I'm still prospecting, old and bat-  
    tered, gaunt and gray,  
    And I'm looking for a grub-stake, and  
    I'm broke.

I strolled up old Bonanza. The same old  
    moon looked down;  
    The same old landmarks seemed to yearn  
    to me;  
But the cabins all were silent, and the flat,  
    once like a town,  
    Was mighty still and lonesome-like to  
    see.



---

## THE PROSPECTOR

---

There were piles and piles of tailings where  
    we toiled with pick and pan,  
And turning round a bend I heard a roar,  
And there a giant gold-ship of the very  
    newest plan  
Was tearing chunks of pay-dirt from the  
    shore.

It wallowed in its water-bed; it burrowed,  
    heaved and swung;  
It gnawed its way ahead with grunts and  
    sighs;  
Its bill of fare was rock and sand; the tail-  
    ings were its dung;  
It glared around with fierce electric eyes.  
Full fifty buckets crammed its maw; it  
    bellowed out for more;  
It looked like some great monster in the  
    gloom.  
With two to feed its sateless greed, it  
    worked for seven score,  
And I sighed: "Ah, old-time miner,  
    here's your doom!"

The idle windlass turns to rust; the sagging  
    sluice-box falls;  
The holes you digged are water to the  
    brim;  
Your little sod-roofed cabins with the  
    snugly moss-chinked walls

---

## THE PROSPECTOR

---

Arc deathly now and mouldering and  
dim.  
The battle-field is silent where of old you  
fought it out;  
The claims you fiercely won are lost and  
sold;  
But there's a little army that they'll never  
put to rout—  
The men who simply live to seek the  
gold.

The men who can't remember when they  
learned to swing a pack,  
Or in what lawless land the quest began;  
The solitary seeker with his grub-stake on  
his back,  
The restless buccaneer of pick and pan.  
On the mesas of the Southland, on the  
tundras of the North,  
You will find us, changed in face but still  
the same;  
And it isn't need, it isn't greed that sends  
us faring forth—  
It's the fever, it's the glory of the game.

For once you've panned the speckled sand  
and seen the bonny dust,  
Its peerless brightness blinds you like a  
spell;

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## THE PROSPECTOR

---

It's little else you care about; you go be-  
cause you must,

And you feel that you could follow it to  
hell.

You'd follow it in hunger, and you'd follow  
it in cold;

You'd follow it in solitude and pain;

And when you're stiff and battened down  
let someone whisper "Gold,"

You're lief to rise and follow it again.

Yet look you, if I find the stuff it's just like  
so much dirt;

I fling it to the four winds like a child.

It's wine and painted women and the things  
that do me hurt,

Till I crawl back, beggared, broken, to  
the Wild.

Till I crawl back, sapped and sodden, to  
my grub-stake and my tent—

There's a city, there's an army (hear  
them shout).

There's the gold in millions, millions, but I  
haven't got a cent;

And oh, it's me, it's me that found it out.

It was my dream that made it good, my  
dream that made me go

To lands of dread and death disprized of  
man;

---

## THE PROSPECTOR

---

But oh, I've known a glory that their hearts  
will never know,  
When I picked the first big nugget from  
my pan.  
It's still my dream, my dauntless dream,  
that drives me forth once more  
To seek and starve and suffer in the  
Vast;  
That heaps my heart with eager hope, that  
glimmers on before—  
My dream that will uplift me to the last.

Perhaps I am stark crazy, but there's none  
of you too sane;  
It's just a little matter of degree.  
My hobby is to hunt out gold; it's fortified  
in my brain;  
It's life and love and wife and home to  
me.  
And I'll strike it, yes, I'll strike it; I've a  
hunch I cannot fail;  
I've a vision, I've a prompting, I've a  
call;  
I hear the hoarse stampeding of an army on  
my trail,  
To the last, the greatest gold camp of  
them all.

---

## THE PROSPECTOR

---

Beyond the shark-tooth ranges sawing savage  
at the sky

There's a lowering land no white man  
ever struck;

There's gold, there's gold in millions, and  
I'll find it if I die,

And I'm going there once more to try  
my luck.

Maybe I'll fail—what matter? It's a man-  
date, it's a vow;

And when in lands of dreariness and  
dread

You seek the last lone frontier, far beyond  
your frontiers now,

You will find the old prospector, silent,  
dead.

*You will find a tattered tent-pole with a  
ragged robe below it;*

*You will find a rusted gold-pan on the  
sod;*

*You will find the claim I'm seeking, with  
my bones as stakes to show it;*

*But I've sought the last Recorder, and  
He's—God.*

---

## THE BLACK SHEEP

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### THE BLACK SHEEP

"The aristocratic ne'er-do-well in Canada frequently finds his way into the ranks of the Royal North-West Mounted Police."—*Extract.*

*HARK to the ewe that bore him:  
"What has muddied the strain?  
Never his brothers before him  
Showed the hint of a stain."  
Hark to the tups and wethers;  
Hark to the old gray ram:  
"We're all of us white, but he's black as  
night,  
And he'll never be worth a damn."*

I'm up on the bally wood-pile at the back  
of the barracks yard;  
"A damned disgrace to the force, sir," with  
a comrade standing guard;  
Making the bluff I'm busy, doing my six  
months hard.

"Six months hard and dismissed, sir."  
Isn't that rather hell?  
And all because of the liquor laws and the  
wiles of a native belle—  
Some "hooch" I gave to a Siwash brave  
who swore that he wouldn't tell.

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## THE BLACK SHEEP

---

At least they say that I did it. It's so in  
the town report.

All that I can recall is a night of revel and  
sport,

When I woke with a "head" in the guard-  
room, and they dragged me sick  
into court.

And the O. C. said: "You are guilty," and  
I said never a word;

For, hang it, you see I couldn't—I didn't  
know *what* had occurred,

And, under the circumstances, denial would  
be absurd.

But the one that cooked my bacon was  
Grubbe, of the City Patrol.

He fagged for my room at Eton, and  
didn't I devil his soul!

And now he is getting even, landing me  
down in the hole.

Plugging away on the wood-pile; doing  
chores round the square.

There goes an officer's lady—gives me a  
haughty stare—

Me that's an earl's own nephew—that is  
the hardest to bear.

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## THE BLACK SHEEP

---

To think of the poor old mater awaiting  
her prodigal son.

Tho' I broke her heart with my folly,  
I was always the white-haired one.  
(That fatted calf that they're cooking will  
surely be overdone.)

I'll go back and yarn to the Bishop; I'll  
dance with the village belle;  
I'll hand round tea to the ladies, and  
everything will be well.  
Where I have been won't matter; what I  
have seen I won't tell.

I'll soar to their ken like a comet. They'll  
see me with never a stain;  
But will they reform me?—far from it.  
We pay for our pleasure with pain;  
But the dog will return to his vomit, the  
hog to his wallow again.

I've chewed on the rind of creation, and  
bitter I've tasted the same;  
Stacked up against hell and damnation,  
I've managed to stay in the game;  
I've had my moments of sorrow; I've had  
my seasons of shame.

---

## THE BLACK SHEEP

---

That's past; when one's nature's a cracked  
    one, it's too jolly hard to mend.  
So long as the road is level, so long as  
    I've cash to spend,  
I'm bound to go to the devil, and it's all  
    the same in the end.

The bugle is sounding for stables; the men  
    troop off through the gloom;  
An orderly laying the tables sings in the  
    bright mess-room.  
(I'll wash in the prison bucket, and brush  
    with the prison broom.)

I'll lie in my cell and listen; I'll wish that  
    I couldn't hear  
The laugh and the chaff of the fellows  
    swigging the canteen beer;  
The nasal tone of the gramophone playing  
    "The Bandolier."

And it seems to me, though it's misty, that  
    night of the flowing bowl,  
That the man who potlatched the whiskey  
    and landed me into the hole  
*Was Grubbe, that unmerciful bounder,*  
    *Grubbe, of the City Patrol.*

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## THE TELEGRAPH OPERATOR

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### THE TELEGRAPH OPERATOR

I WILL not wash my face;  
I will not brush my hair;  
I "pig" around the place—  
There's nobody to care.  
Nothing but rock and tree;  
Nothing but wood and stone.  
Oh, God, it's hell to be  
Alone, alone, alone!

Snow-peaks and deep-gashed draws  
Corral me in a ring.  
I feel as if I was  
The only living thing  
On all this blighted earth;  
And so I frowst and shrink,  
And crouching by my hearth  
I hear the thoughts I think.

I think of all I miss—  
The boys I used to know;  
The girls I used to kiss;  
The coin I used to blow;  
The bars I used to haunt;  
The racket and the row;  
The beers I didn't want  
(I wish I had 'em now).

---

## THE TELEGRAPH OPERATOR

---

Day after day the same,  
Only a little worse;  
No one to grouch or blame—  
Oh, for a loving curse!  
Oh, in the night I fear,  
Haunted by nameless things,  
Just for a voice to cheer,  
Just for a hand that clings!

Faintly as from a star  
Voices come o'er the line;  
Voices of ghosts afar,  
Not in this world of mine;  
Lives in whose loom I grope;  
Words in whose weft I hear  
Eager the thrill of hope,  
Awful the chill of fear.

I'm thinking out aloud;  
I reckon that is bad;  
(The snow is like a shroud)—  
Maybe I'm going mad.  
Say! wouldn't that be tough?  
This awful hush that hugs  
And chokes one is enough  
To make a man go "bugs."

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## THE TELEGRAPH OPERATOR

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There's not a thing to do;  
I cannot sleep at night;  
No wonder I'm so blue;  
Oh, for a friendly fight!  
The din and rush of strife;  
A music-hall aglow;  
A crowd, a city, life—  
Dear God, I miss it so!

Here, you have moped enough!  
Brace up and play the game!  
But say, it's awful tough—  
Day after day the same  
(I've said that twice, I bet).  
Well, there's not much to say.  
I wish I had a pet,  
Or something I could play.

Cheer up! don't get so glum  
And sick of everything;  
The worst is yet to come;  
God help you till the Spring.  
God shield you from the Fear;  
Teach you to laugh, not moan.  
Ha! ha! it sounds so queer—  
Alone, alone, alone!

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## THE WOOD-CUTTER

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### THE WOOD-CUTTER

*THE sky is like an envelope,  
One of those blue official things;  
And, sealing it, to mock our hope,  
The moon, a silver wafer, clings.  
What shall we find when death gives leave  
To read—our sentence or reprieve?*

I'm holding it down on God's scrap-pile,  
up on the fag-end of earth;  
O'er me a menace of mountains, a river  
that grits at my feet;  
Face to face with my soul-self, weighing  
my life at its worth;  
Wondering what I was made for, here  
in my last retreat.

Last! Ah, yes, it's the finish. Have ever  
you heard a man cry?  
(Sobs that rake him and rend him, right  
from the base of the chest.)  
That's how I've cried, oh, so often; and  
now that my tears are dry,  
I sit in the desolate quiet and wait for  
the infinite Rest.

---

## THE WOOD-CUTTER

---

Rest! Well, it's restful around me; it's  
quiet clean to the core.

The mountains pose in their ermine, in  
golden the hills are clad;

The big, blue, silt-freighted Yukon seethes  
by my cabin door,

And I think it's only the river that keeps  
me from going mad.

By day it's a ruthless monster, a callous,  
insatiate thing,

With oily bubble and eddy, with sudden  
swirling of breast;

By night it's a writhing Titan, sullenly  
murmuring,

Ever and ever goaded, and ever crying  
for rest.

It cries for its human tribute, but me it  
will never drown.

I've learned the lore of my river; my  
river obeys me well.

I hew and I launch my cordwood, and raft  
it to Dawson town,

Where wood means wine and women,  
and, incidentally, hell.



---

## THE WOOD-CUTTER

---

Hell and the anguish thereafter. Here as  
I sit alone

I'd give the life I have left me to lighten  
some load of care:

(The bitterest part of the bitter is being  
denied to atone;

Lips that have mocked at Heaven lend  
themselves ill to prayer.)

*Impotent as a beetle pierced on the needle  
of Fate;*

*A wretch in a cosmic death-cell, peaks  
for my prison bars;*

*'Whelmed by a world stupendous, lonely  
and listless I wait,*

*Drowned in a sea of silence, strewn with  
confetti of stars.*

See! from far up the valley a rapier  
pierces the night,

The white search-ray of a steamer.  
Swiftly, serenely it nears;

A proud, white, alien presence, a glittering  
galley of light,

Confident-poised, triumphant, freighted  
with hopes and fears.

---

## THE WOOD-CUTTER

---

I look as one looks on a vision; I see it  
pulsating by;

I glimpse joy-radiant faces; I hear the  
thresh of the wheel.

Hoof-like my heart beats a moment; then  
silence swoops from the sky.

Darkness is piled upon darkness. God  
only knows how I feel.

Maybe you've seen me sometimes; maybe  
you've pitied me then—

The lonely waif of the wood-camp, here  
by my cabin door.

Some day you'll look and see not; futile  
and outcast of men,

I shall be far from your pity, resting for-  
evermore.

*My life was a problem in ciphers, a weary  
and profitless sum.*

*Slipshod and stupid I worked it, dazed  
by negation and doubt.*

*Ciphers the total confronts me. O Death,  
with thy moistened thumb,*

*Stoop like a petulant schoolboy, wipe me  
forever out!*

---

## THE SONG OF THE MOUTH-ORGAN

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### THE SONG OF THE MOUTH-ORGAN

(With apologies to the singer of the "Song of the Banjo.")

I'M a homely little bit of tin and bone;  
I'm beloved by the Legion of the Lost;  
I haven't got a "vox humana" tone,  
And a dime or two will satisfy my cost.  
I don't attempt your high-falutin' flights;  
I am more or less uncertain on the key;  
But I tell you, boys, there's lots and lots  
of nights  
When you've taken mighty comfort out  
of me.

I weigh an ounce or two, and I'm so small  
You can pack me in the pocket of your  
vest;  
And when at night so wearily you crawl  
Into your bunk and stretch your limbs  
to rest,  
You take me out and play me soft and low,  
The simple songs that trouble your  
heartstrings;  
The tunes you used to fancy long ago,  
Before you made a rotten mess of  
things.

---

## THE SONG OF THE MOUTH-ORGAN

---

Then a dreamy look will come into your  
eyes,

And you break off in the middle of a  
note;

And then, with just the dreariest of sighs,  
You drop me in the pocket of your coat.

But somehow I have bucked you up a bit;

And, as you turn around and face the  
wall,

You don't feel quite so spineless and  
unfit—

You're not so bad a fellow after all.

Do you recollect the bitter Arctic night;  
Your camp beside the canyon on the  
trail;

Your tent a tiny square of orange light;  
The moon above consumptive-like and  
pale;

Your supper cooked, your little stove  
aglow;

You tired, but snug and happy as a  
child?

Then 'twas "Turkey in the Straw" till  
your lips were nearly raw,

And you hurled your bold defiance at  
the Wild.

---

## THE SONG OF THE MOUTH-ORGAN

---

Do you recollect the flashing, lashing pain;  
The gulf of humid blackness overhead;  
The lightning making rapiers of the rain;  
The cattle-horns like candles of the  
dead;

You sitting on your broncho there alone,  
In your slicker, saddle-sore and sick  
with cold?

Do you think the silent herd did not hear  
"The Mocking Bird,"  
Or relish "Silver Threads among the  
Gold"?

Do you recollect the wild Magellan coast;  
The head-winds and the icy, roaring  
seas;

The nights you thought that everything  
was lost;

The days you toiled in water to your  
knees;

The frozen ratlines shrieking in the gale;  
The hissing steeps and gulfs of livid  
foam:

When you cheered your messmates nine  
with "Ben Bolt" and "Clementine,"  
And "Dixie Land" and "Seeing Nellie  
Home"?

---

## THE SONG OF THE MOUTH-ORGAN

---

Let the jammy banjo voice the Younger  
Son,

Who waits for his remittance to arrive;  
I represent the grimy, gritty one,

Who sweats his bones to keep himself  
alive;

Who's up against the real thing from his  
birth;

Whose heritage is hard and bitter toil;  
I voice the weary, smeary ones of earth,  
The helots of the sea and of the soil.

I'm the Steinway of strange mischief and  
mischance;

I'm the Stradivarius of blank defeat;  
In the down-world, when the devil leads  
the dance,

I am simply and symbolically meet;  
I'm the irrepressive spirit of mankind;  
I'm the small boy playing knuckle-down  
with Death;

At the end of all things known, where  
God's rubbish-heap is thrown,  
I shrill impudent triumph at a breath.

---

## THE SONG OF THE MOUTH-ORGAN

---

I'm a humble little bit of tin and horn;  
I'm a byword, I'm a plaything, I'm a  
jest;  
The virtuoso looks on me with scorn;  
But there's times when I am better than  
the best.  
Ask the stoker and the sailor of the sea;  
Ask the mucker and the hewer of the  
pine;  
Ask the herder of the plain, ask the  
gleaner of the grain—  
There's a lowly, loving kingdom—and  
it's mine.



---

## THE TRAIL OF NINETY-EIGHT

---

### THE TRAIL OF NINETY-EIGHT

#### I.

GOLD! We leapt from our benches. Gold!  
We sprang from our stools.  
Gold! We wheeled in the furrow, fired  
with the faith of fools.  
Fearless, unfound, unfitted, far from the  
night and the cold,  
Heard we the clarion summons, followed  
the master-lure—Gold!

Men from the sands of the Sunland; men  
from the woods of the West;  
Men from the farms and the cities, into  
the Northland we pressed.  
Graybeards and striplings and women,  
good men and bad men and bold,  
Leaving our homes and our loved ones,  
crying exultantly—"Gold!"

Never was seen such an army, pitiful,  
futile, unfit;  
Never was seen such a spirit, manifold  
courage and grit;  
Never has been such a cohort under one  
banner unrolled  
As surged to the ragged-edged Arctic,  
urged by the arch-tempter—Gold.

---

## THE TRAIL OF NINETY-EIGHT

---

"Farewell!" we cried to our dearests;  
    little we cared for their tears.  
"Farewell!" we cried to the humdrum and  
    the yoke of the hireling years;  
Just like a pack of school-boys, and the  
    big crowd cheered us good-bye.  
Never were hearts so uplifted, never were  
    hopes so high.

The spectral shores flitted past us, and  
    every whirl of the screw  
Hurled us nearer to fortune, and ever we  
    planned what we'd do—  
Do with the gold when we got it—big,  
    shiny nuggets like plums,  
There in the sand of the river, gouging it  
    out with our thumbs.

And one man wanted a castle, another a  
    racing stud;  
A third would cruise in a palace yacht like  
    a red-necked prince of blood.  
And so we dreamed and we vaunted, mil-  
    lionaires to a man,  
Leaping to wealth in our visions long ere  
    the trail began.

---

## THE TRAIL OF NINETY-EIGHT.

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### II.

We landed in wind-swept Skagway. We  
    joined the weltering mass  
Clamoring over their outfits, waiting to  
    climb the Pass.  
We tightened our girths and our pack-  
    straps; we linked on the Human  
    Chain,  
Struggling up to the summit, where every  
    step was a pain.

Gone was the joy of our faces, grim and  
    haggard and pale;  
The heedless mirth of the shipboard was  
    changed to the care of the trail.  
We flung ourselves in the struggle, pack-  
    ing our grub in relays,  
Step by step to the summit in the bale of  
    the winter days.

Floundering deep in the sump-holes,  
    stumbling out again;  
Crying with cold and weakness, crazy with  
    fear and pain.  
Then from the depths of our travail, ere  
    our spirits were broke,  
Grim, tenacious and savage, the lust of the  
    trail awoke.

---

## THE TRAIL OF NINETY-EIGHT

---

"Klondike or bust!" rang the slogan;  
every man for his own.

Oh, how we flogged the horses, staggering  
skin and bone!

Oh, how we cursed their weakness,  
anguish they could not tell,

Breaking their hearts in our passion, lashing  
them on till they fell!

For grub meant gold to our thinking, and  
all that could walk must pack;

The sheep for the shambles stumbled,  
each with a load on its back;

And even the swine were burdened, and  
grunted and squealed and rolled,

And men went mad in the moment, huskily  
clamoring "Gold!"

Oh, we were brutes and devils, goaded by  
lust and fear!

Our eyes were strained to the summit;  
the weaklings dropped to the rear,

Falling in heaps by the trail-side, heart-  
broken, limp and wan;

But the gaps closed up in an instant, and  
heedless the chain went on.

---

## THE TRAIL OF NINETY-EIGHT

---

Never will I forget it, there on the mountain face,  
Antlike, men with their burdens, clinging  
in icy space;  
Dogged, determined and dauntless, cruel  
and callous and cold,  
Cursing, blaspheming, reviling, and ever  
that battle-cry—"Gold!"

Thus toiled we, the army of fortune, in  
hunger and hope and despair,  
Till glacier, mountain and forest vanished,  
and, radiantly fair,  
There at our feet lay Lake Bennett, and  
down to its welcome we ran:  
The trail of the land was over, the trail  
of the water began.

### III.

We built our boats and we launched them.  
Never has been such a fleet;  
A packing-case for a bottom, a mackinaw  
for a sheet.  
Shapeless, grotesque, lopsided, flimsy,  
makeshift and crude,  
Each man after his fashion builded as best  
he could.

---

## THE TRAIL OF NINETY-EIGHT

---

Each man worked like a demon, as prow  
to rudder we raced;  
The winds of the Wild cried "Hurry!"  
the voice of the waters, "Haste!"  
We hated those driving before us; we  
dreaded those pressing behind;  
We cursed the slow current that bore us;  
we prayed to the God of the wind.

Spring! and the hillsides flourished, vivid  
in jewelled green;  
Spring! and our hearts' blood nourished  
envy and hatred and spleen.  
Little cared we for the Spring-birth;  
much cared we to get on—  
Stake in the Great White Channel, stake  
ere the best be gone.

The greed of the gold possessed us; pity  
and love were forgot;  
Covetous visions obsessed us; brother with  
brother fought.  
Partner with partner wrangled, each one  
claiming his due;  
Wrangled and halved their outfits, saw-  
ing their boats in two.

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## THE TRAIL OF NINETY-EIGHT

---

Thuswise we voyaged Lake Bennett, Tag-  
ish, then Windy Arm,  
Sinister, savage and baleful, boding us  
hate and harm.  
Many a scow was shattered there on that  
iron shore;  
Many a heart was broken straining at  
sweep and oar.

We roused Lake Marsh with a chorus, we  
drifted many a mile;  
There was the canyon before us—cave-  
like its dark defile;  
The shores swept faster and faster; the  
river narrowed to wrath;  
Waters that hissed disaster reared upright  
in our path.

Beneath us the green tumult churning,  
above us the cavernous gloom;  
Around us, swift twisting and turning, the  
black, sullen walls of a tomb.  
We spun like a chip in a mill-race; our  
hearts hammered under the test;  
Then—oh, the relief on each chill face!  
—we soared into sunlight and rest.

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## THE TRAIL OF NINETY-EIGHT

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Hand sought for hand on the instant.  
Cried we, "Our troubles are o'er!"  
Then like a rumble of thunder, heard we  
a canorous roar.  
Leaping and boiling and seething, saw we  
a cauldron afume;  
There was the rage of the rapids, there  
was the menace of doom.

The river springs like a racer, sweeps  
through a gash in the rock;  
Butts at the boulder-ribbed bottom, stag-  
gers and rears at the shock;  
Leaps like a terrified monster, writhes in  
its fury and pain;  
Then with the crash of a demon springs  
to the onset again.

Dared we that ravening terror; heard we  
its din in our ears;  
Called on the gods of our fathers, juggled  
forlorn with our fears;  
Sank to our waists in its fury, tossed to  
the sky like a fleece;  
Then, when our dread was the greatest,  
crashed into safety and peace.

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## THE TRAIL OF NINETY-EIGHT

---

But what of the others that followed,  
losing their boats by the score?  
Well could we see them and hear them,  
strung down that desolate shore.  
What of the poor souls that perished?  
Little of them shall be said—  
On to the Golden Valley, pause not to bury  
the dead.

Then there were days of drifting, breezes  
soft as a sigh;  
Night trailed her robe of jewels over the  
floor of the sky.  
The moonlit stream was a python, silver,  
sinuous, vast.  
That writhed on a shroud of velvet—well,  
it was done at last.

There were the tents of Dawson, there  
the scar of the slide;  
Swiftly we poled o'er the shallows, swiftly  
leapt o'er the side.  
Fires fringed the mouth of Bonanza; sun-  
set gilded the dome;  
The test of the trail was over—thank God,  
thank God, we were Home!

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## CLANCY OF THE MOUNTED POLICE

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### CLANCY OF THE MOUNTED POLICE

IN the little Crimson Manual it's written  
plain and clear  
That who would wear the scarlet coat  
shall say good-bye to fear;  
Shall be a guardian of the right, a sleuth-  
hound of the trail—  
In the little Crimson Manual there's no  
such word as "fail"—  
Shall follow on though heavens fall, or  
hell's top-turrets freeze,  
Half round the world, if need there be,  
on bleeding hands and knees.  
It's duty, duty, first and last, the Crimson  
Manual saith;  
The Scarlet Rider makes reply: "It's duty  
—to the death."  
And so they sweep the solitudes, free men  
from all the earth;  
And so they sentinel the woods, the wilds  
that know their worth;  
And so they scour the startled plains and  
mock at hurt and pain,  
And read their Crimson Manual, and find  
their duty plain.  
Knights of the lists of unrenown, born  
of the frontier's need,

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## CLANCY OF THE MOUNTED POLICE

---

Disdainful of the spoken word, exultant in  
the deed;  
Unconscious heroes of the waste, proud  
players of the game,  
Props of the power behind the throne,  
upholders of the name:  
For thus the Great White Chief hath said,  
"In all my lands be peace,"  
And to maintain his word he gave his  
West the Scarlet Police.

Livid-lipped was the valley, still as the  
grave of God;  
Misty shadows of mountain thinned into  
mists of cloud;  
Corpselike and stark was the land, with a  
quiet that crushed and awed,  
And the stars of the weird sub-Arctic  
glimmered over its shroud.

Deep in the trench of the valley two men  
stationed the Post,  
Seymour and Clancy the reckless, fresh  
from the long patrol;  
Seymour, the sergeant, and Clancy—  
Clancy who made his boast  
He could cinch like a broncho the  
Northland, and cling to the prongs  
of the Pole.

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## CLANCY OF THE MOUNTED POLICE

---

Two lone men on detachment, standing  
for law on the trail;

Undismayed in the vastness, wise with  
the wisdom of old—

Out of the night hailed a half-breed telling  
a pitiful tale,

“White man starving and crazy on the  
banks of the Nordenscold.”

Up sprang the red-haired Clancy, lean and  
eager of eye;

Loaded the long toboggan, strapped each  
dog at its post;

Whirled his lash at the leader; then, with a  
whoop and a cry,

Into the Great White Silence faded away  
like a ghost.

The clouds were a misty shadow, the hills  
were a shadowy mist;

Sunless, voiceless and pulseless, the day  
was a dream of woe;

Through the ice-rifts the river smoked and  
bubbled and hissed;

Behind was a trail fresh broken, in front  
the untrodden snow.

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## CLANCY OF THE MOUNTED POLICE

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Ahead of the dogs ploughed Clancy,  
haloed by steaming breath;  
Through peril of open water, through  
ache of insenate cold;  
Up rivers wantonly winding in a land  
affianced to death,  
Till he came to a cowering cabin on the  
banks of the Nordenscold.

Then Clancy loosed his revolver, and he  
strode through the open door;  
And there was the man he sought for,  
crouching beside the fire;  
The hair of his beard was singeing, the  
frost on his back was hoar,  
And ever he crooned and chanted as if  
he never would tire:—

*“I panned and I panned in the shiny sand,  
and I sniped on the river bar;  
But I know, I know, that it’s down below  
that the golden treasures are;  
So I’ll wait and wait till the floods abate,  
and I’ll sink a shaft once more,  
And I’d like to bet that I’ll go home yet  
with a brass band playing on before.”*

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## CLANCY OF THE MOUNTED POLICE

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He was nigh as thin as a sliver, and he  
whined like a Moose-hide cur;

So Clancy clothed him and nursed him  
as a mother nurses a child;

Lifted him on the toboggan, wrapped him  
in robes of fur,

Then with the dogs sore straining  
started to face the Wild.

Said the Wild, "I will crush this Clancy, so  
fearless and insolent;

For him will I loose my fury, and blind  
and buffet and beat;

Pile up my snows to stay him; then when  
his strength is spent,

Leap on him from my ambush and  
crush him under my feet.

"Him will I ring with my silence, compass  
him with my cold;

Closer and closer clutch him unto mine  
icy breast;

Buffet him with my blizzards, deep in my  
snows enfold,

Claiming his life as my tribute, giving  
my wolves the rest."



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## CLANCY OF THE MOUNTED POLICE

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Clancy crawled through the vastness; o'er  
him the hate of the Wild;  
Full on his face fell the blizzard; cheer-  
ing his huskies he ran;  
Fighting, fierce-hearted and tireless, snows  
that drifted and piled,  
With ever and ever behind him singing  
the crazy man:

*"Sing hey, sing ho, for the ice and snow,  
And a heart that's ever merry;  
Let us trim and square with a lover's care  
(For why should a man be sorry?)  
A grave deep, deep, with the moon a-peep,  
A grave in the frozen mould.  
Sing hey, sing ho, for the winds that blow,  
And a grave deep down in the ice and  
snow,  
A grave in the land of gold."*

Day after day of darkness, the whirl of  
the seething snows;  
Day after day of blindness, the swoop  
of the stinging blast;  
On through a blur of fury, the swing of  
staggering blows;  
On through a world of turmoil, empty,  
inane, and vast.

---

## CLANCY OF THE MOUNTED POLICE

---

Night with its writhing storm-whirl, night  
despairingly black;

Night with its hours of terror, numb  
and endlessly long;

Night with its weary waiting, fighting the  
shadows back,

And ever the crouching madman singing  
his crazy song.

Cold with its creeping terror, cold with its  
sudden clinch;

Cold so utter you wonder if 'twill ever  
again be warm;

Clancy grinned as he shuddered, "Surely  
it isn't a cinch

Being wet-nurse to a looney in the teeth  
of an Arctic storm."

The blizzard passed and the dawn broke,  
knife-edged and crystal clear;

The sky was a blue-domed iceberg, sun-  
shine outlawed away;

Ever by snowslide and ice-rip haunted and  
hovered the Fear;

Ever the Wild malignant poised and  
panted to slay.

The lead-dog freezes in harness—cut him  
out of the team!

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## CLANCY OF THE MOUNTED POLICE

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The lung of the wheel-dog's bleeding—  
shoot him and let him lie!  
On and on with the others—lash them until  
they scream!  
“Pull for your lives, you devils! On!  
To halt is to die.”

There in the frozen vastness Clancy fought  
with his foes;  
The ache of the stiffened fingers, the cut  
of the snowshoe thong;  
Cheeks black-raw through the hood-flap,  
eyes that tingled and closed,  
And ever to urge and cheer him quavered  
the madman's song.

Colder it grew and colder, till the last heat  
left the earth,  
And there in the great stark stillness the  
bale fires glinted and gleamed,  
And the Wild all around exulted and shook  
with a devilish mirth,  
And life was far and forgotten, the  
ghost of a joy once dreamed.

Death! And one who defied it, a man of  
the Mounted Police;  
Fought it there to a standstill long after  
hope was gone;  
Grinned through his bitter anguish, fought  
without let or cease,

---

## CLANCY OF THE MOUNTED POLICE

---

Suffering, straining, striving, stumbling,  
struggling on.

Till the dogs lay down in their traces, and  
rose and staggered and fell;

Till the eyes of him dimmed with  
shadows, and the trail was so hard  
to see;

Till the Wild howled out triumphant, and  
the world was a frozen hell—

Then said Constable Clancy: "I guess  
that it's up to me."

Far down the trail they saw him, and his  
hands they were blanched like bone;

His face was a blackened horror, from  
his eyelids the salt rheum ran;

His feet he was lifting strangely, as if they  
were made of stone,

But safe in his arms and sleeping he car-  
ried the crazy man.

So Clancy got into Barracks, and the boys  
made rather a scene;

And the O. C. called him a hero, and was  
nice as a man could be;

But Clancy gazed down his trousers at the  
place where his toes had been,

And then he howled like a husky, and  
sang in a shaky key:

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## CLANCY OF THE MOUNTED POLICE

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*"When I go back to the old love that's true  
to the finger-tips,  
I'll say: 'Here's bushels of gold, love,'  
and I'll kiss my girl on the lips;  
'It's yours to have and to hold, love.' It's  
the proud, proud boy I'll be,  
When I go back to the old love that's  
waited so long for me."*

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## LOST

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## LOST

*"BLACK is the sky, but the land is white—  
(O the wind, the snow and the storm!)  
Father, where is our boy to-night?  
Pray to God he is safe and warm."*

*"Mother, mother, why should you fear?  
Safe is he, and the Arctic moon  
Over his cabin shines so clear—  
Rest and sleep, 'twill be morning soon."*

"It's getting dark awful sudden. Say, this  
is mighty queer!  
Where in the world have I got to? It's  
still and black as a tomb.  
I reckoned the camp was yonder, I figured  
the trail was here—  
Nothing! Just draw and valley packed  
with quiet and gloom;  
Snow that comes down like feathers, thick  
and gobby and gray;  
Night that looks spiteful ugly—seems that  
I've lost my way.

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## LOST

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“The cold’s got an edge like a jackknife—  
it must be forty below;  
Leastways that’s what it seems like—it  
cuts so fierce to the bone.  
The wind’s getting real ferocious; it’s heav-  
ing and whirling the snow;  
It shrieks with a howl of fury, it dies  
away to a moan;  
Its arms sweep round like a banshee’s,  
swift and icily white,  
And buffet and blind and beat me. Lord!  
it’s a hell of a night!

“I’m all tangled up in a blizzard. There’s  
only one thing to do—  
Keep on moving and moving; it’s death,  
it’s death if I rest.  
Oh, God! if I see the morning, if only I  
struggle through,  
I’ll say the prayers I’ve forgotten since I  
lay on my mother’s breast.  
I seem going round in a circle; maybe the  
camp is near.  
Say! did somebody holler? Was it a  
light I saw?  
Or was it only a notion? I’ll shout, and  
maybe they’ll hear—  
No! the wind only drowns me—shout  
till my throat is raw.



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LOST

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“The boys are all round the camp-fire  
wondering when I’ll be back.

They’ll soon be starting to seek me;  
they’ll scarcely wait for the light.

What will they find, I wonder, when they  
come to the end of my track—

A hand stuck out of a snowdrift, frozen  
and stiff and white.

That’s what they’ll strike, I reckon; that’s  
how they’ll find their pard,

A pie-faced corpse in a snowbank—curse  
you, don’t be a fool!

Play the game to the finish; bet on your  
very last card;

Nerve yourself for the struggle. Oh, you  
coward, keep cool!

“I’m going to lick this blizzard; I’m going  
to live the night.

It can’t down me with its bluster—I’m  
not the kind to be beat.

On hands and knees will I buck it; with  
every breath will I fight;

It’s life, it’s life that I fight for—never it  
seemed so sweet.

I know that my face is frozen; my hands  
are numblike and dead;

## LOST

---

But oh, my feet keep a-moving, heavy  
and hard and slow;  
They're trying to kill me, kill me, the night  
that's black overhead,

The wind that cuts like a razor, the  
whipcord lash of the snow.  
Keep a-moving, a-moving; don't, don't  
stumble, you fool!

Curse this snow that's a-piling a-purpose  
to block my way.  
It's heavy as gold in the rocker, it's white  
and fleecy as wool;

It's soft as a bed of feathers, it's warm  
as a stack of hay.  
Curse on my feet that slip so, my poor  
tired, stumbling feet—

I guess they're a job for the surgeon,  
they feel so queerlike to lift—  
I'll rest them just for a moment—oh, but to  
rest is sweet!

The awful wind cannot get me, deep,  
deep down in the drift."

*"Father, a bitter cry I heard,  
Out of the night so dark and wild.  
Why is my heart so strangely stirred?  
'Twas like the voice of our erring child."*

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LOST

---

*"Mother, mother, you only heard  
A waterfowl in the locked lagoon—  
Out of the night a wounded bird—  
Rest and sleep, 'twill be morning soon."*

"Who is it talks of sleeping? I'll swear  
that somebody shook

Me hard by the arm for a moment, but  
how on earth could it be?

See how my feet are moving—awfully  
funny they look—

Moving as if they belonged to a someone  
that wasn't me.

The wind down the night's long alley bowls  
me down like a pin;

I stagger and fall and stagger, crawl  
arm-deep in the snow.

Beaten back to my corner, how can I hope  
to win?

And there is the blizzard waiting to give  
me the knockout blow.

"Oh, I'm so warm and sleepy! No more  
hunger and pain.

Just to rest for a moment; was ever rest  
such a joy?

Ha! what was that? I'll swear it, some-  
body shook me again;

Somebody seemed to whisper: 'Fight  
to the last, my boy.'

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## LOST

---

Fight! That's right, I must struggle. I  
know that to rest means death;  
Death, but then what does death mean?—  
ease from a world of strife.  
Life has been none too pleasant; yet with  
my failing breath  
Still and still must I struggle, fight for  
the gift of life.

\* \* \* \* \*

Seems that I must be dreaming! Here is  
the old home trail;  
Yonder a light is gleaming; oh, I know  
it so well!  
The air is scented with clover; the cattle  
wait by the rail;  
Father is through with the milking; there  
goes the supper-bell.

\* \* \* \* \*

Mother, your boy is crying, out in the night  
and cold;  
Let me in and forgive me, I'll never be  
bad any more:  
I'm, oh, so sick and so sorry: please, dear  
mother, don't scold—  
It's just your boy, and he wants you . . .  
Mother, open the door. . . ."

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## LOST

---

*"Father, father, I saw a face  
Pressed just now to the window-pane!  
Oh, it gazed for a moment's space,  
Wild and wan, and was gone again!"*

*"Mother, mother, you saw the snow  
Drifted down from the maple tree  
(Oh, the wind that is sobbing so!  
Weary and worn and old are we)—  
Only the snow and a wounded loon—  
Rest and sleep, 'twill be morning soon."*

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## L'ENVOI

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## L'ENVOI

*We talked of yesteryears, of trails and  
treasure,  
Of men who played the game and lost or  
won;  
Of mad stampedes, of toil beyond all  
measure,  
Of camp-fire comfort when the day was  
done.  
We talked of sullen nights by moon-dogs  
haunted,  
Of bird and beast and tree, of rod and  
gun;  
Of boat and tent, of hunting-trip enchanted  
Beneath the wonder of the midnight sun;  
Of bloody-footed dogs that gnawed the  
traces,  
Of prisoned seas, wind-lashed and winter-  
locked:*

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## L'ENVOI

---

*The ice-gray dawn was pale upon our faces,  
Yet still we filled the cup and still we  
talked.*

*The city street was dimmed. We saw the  
glitter*

*Of moon-picked brilliants on the virgin  
snow,*

*And down the drifted canyon heard the  
bitter,*

*Relentless slogan of the winds of woe.*

*The city was forgot, and, parka-skirted,*

*We trod that leagueless land that once we  
knew;*

*We saw stream past, down valleys glacier-  
girted,*

*The wolf-worn legions of the caribou.*

*We smoked our pipes, o'er scenes of  
triumph dwelling;*

*Of deeds of daring, dire defeats, we  
talked;*

*And other tales that lost not in the telling,  
Ere to our beds uncertainly we walked.*

*And so, dear friends, in gentler valleys  
roaming,*

*Perhaps, when on my printed page you  
look,*

*Your fancies by the firelight may go  
homing*



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## L'ENVOI

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*To that lone land that haply you forsook.  
And if perchance you hear the silence  
calling,  
The frozen music of star-yearning  
heights,  
Or, dreaming, see the seines of silver  
trawling  
Across the sky's abyss on vasty nights,  
You may recall that sweep of savage  
splendor,  
That land that measures each man at his  
worth,  
And feel in memory, half fierce, half tender,  
The brotherhood of men that know the  
North.*







